



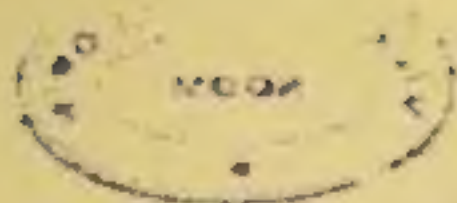
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THE
BHUMIJAS OF SERAIKELLA

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FOREWORD

The data for this short paper on the Bhumijās were collected in course of an excursion undertaken by the Department of Anthropology, Calcutta University, in the State of Seraikella during February, 1926. The paper does not presume to be anything more than a faithful record of some of the institutions of a well-known tribe which is passing through a transitional period of culture in its attempt to adopt Hindu ideas and institutions. I have tried to present the facts in their barest simplicity without any attempt at theoretical considerations.

Our little excursion in the State of Seraikella was made possible through the generosity of Maharaja Udit Narayan Sing Deo, Ruling Chief of the Seraikella State, and of his worthy heir-apparent Yuvaraj Aditya Pratap Sing Deo whose enlightened encouragement in educational matters is well worthy of imitation. I am indebted to Dr. Panchanan Mitra, M.A., Ph.D. (Yale) and Mr. Tarak Chandra Ray Chaudhury, M.A., members of the excursion party for their very valuable help in the preparation of this paper. I also take this opportunity to render my thanks to the senior students of Anthropology Class of 1926 for their hearty co-operation which made it possible to collect materials for this paper and in this connection the name of Mr. Sachindra Nath Biswas deserves special mention.

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THE BHUMIJAS OF SERAIKELLA

CHAPTER I.

CRISIS IN THE LIFE OF AN INDIVIDUAL.

Birth.

When a Bhumij woman feels the approach of labour pain she informs her mother-in-law or any other female member of the family. Though the Bhumijas do not cherish an extremely rigorous view, like the Hos, on the uncleanness of a parturient woman yet the act of actually delivering the child is never undertaken by them. This is specially the work of Ghāsi women who are employed as midwives by the Hindus as well as the tribal population of the tract. The Ghāsis form the lowest stratum of the social system of the tract and are regarded as such equally by the Hindu castes and the aboriginal tribes. Even they themselves acquiesce in it, though claiming to be recognised as Hindus. It need not be imagined that they are employed for any special training they might have received but they base their claim for this difficult task on their practical experience acquired at the expense of many expectant mothers. Any ambitious woman of this caste with a deft hand may set up as a midwife and thus chalk out a career for herself. Unlike their Ho sisters Bhumij women do not hesitate to render assistance to the parturient woman and often relatives and friends are seen attending the woman in the lying-in-room

though they do not actually deliver the child. Such persons are, for the time being, regarded as unclean and are purified by bathing as soon as they come out of the house. No separate hut is raised for the purpose; when available, the cow-shed or any other unoccupied hut is turned into the lying-in-room. If the pair possess only one hut, the sleeping compartment of it serves for the purpose but the kitchen portion is left undisturbed. The husband and other members of the house, if there be any, seek out some temporary shelter for themselves. It is needless to state that males including the husband, are not allowed to be present at the parturition of a woman.

The umbilical cord is severed by the Gbasi midwife who puts it and the after-birth in a hole dug outside the hut by the side of one of its walls, usually beneath the eaves. The hole is then filled up with earth and a piece of stone placed over it so that dogs and jackals may not disturb its contents.

Reports vary as to the exact number of days the mother has to remain in the lying-in-room. It ranges from eight to ten days. During this period the whole family is regarded as unclean. On the last day of this period the Hindu washerman cleanses the clothes of the family and the Hindu barber (Bhāṇḍārī) shaves the male members and pares the nails of all the members of the family, both male and female, who may be present on the day. He then pares the nails of the new-born child. Thus the ceremonial uncleanness of the family is removed.

The usual remuneration of the barber is four annas together with uncooked food for a meal whereas that of the midwife is two annas for a girl and four annas for a boy. But the amount varies with the status and pecuniary condition of the family.

• *Early Life and Education.*

Mr. Tozzer has rightly remarked that "the early training of youth in primitive communities is often far more effective than is commonly supposed. It is a sort of apprentice system and imitation is the basis of instruction. Agriculture, hunting, pottery-making, weaving, are all taught by means of play." We shall see that this has been greatly realised by the Bhumijas in the training of their manhood. Children in Bhumij society grow directly under 'Dame Nature's' own care. The parents have neither the time nor the inclination to bestow any attention on the proper (in our sense) bringing up of the children. But it should not be supposed that Bhumij parents are, in any way, devoid of the natural amount of affection for their offspring. The apparent carelessness with which the children are brought up is quite in keeping with the cultural ideas of the tribe.

The Bhumijas do not possess any regular institution for the training of their boys and girls in the arts of life. Neither have they adopted the indigenous Hindu institution nor its imported English counterpart. Both boys and girls pass their first few years of life in a continuous round of play and merry-making without the least interference from their guardians. But their halcyon days are prematurely cut short and the young hopes are soon brought to face the hard realities of life. It has already been observed that the Bhumijas are pre-eminently agriculturists and every Bhumij family of ordinary means own a number of cattle or buffaloes or both. These animals require tending and as soon as Bhumij boys are six or seven years old they are put in charge of them. Neither milk nor any of its preparation is used by the Bhumijas as food, so generally the cattle, whether cow or oxen are indiscriminately used by them for ploughing the field. Thus during the agricultural season the animals are employed from morning till afternoon in the field and are fed

at home by the boys with preserved fodder such as straw. But during the other months of the year they are tended in the harvested fields or *sāl* forests. So during this period too the boys have to be with the cattle during the greater part of the day. This does not finish their duty—as soon as the cattle return from their afternoon-stroll they have to put them securely in the fold. Thus the whole care of the cattle falls on the young shoulders of these boys who thus receive a practical training in the very useful and important art of cattle-rearing on which the farmer's future depends so much.

In addition to the tending of cattle he is also trained, during this period, in the minor operations of the field such as weeding and reaping. At about twelve or thirteen years of age he is initiated into the more important functions of ploughing and transplantation.¹ During the months of tillage a Bhumij lad may be found following his father's plough with his own while tilling the field. Sowing and harrowing require special knowledge and are learned later in life. Thus, in four or five years more he masters the whole of the farmer's art both in theory and practice. Such theoretical knowledge as the proper time of ploughing, sowing, transplanting and reaping he acquires by observation. From year to year he sees these operations repeated in the very same way as before and thus can easily pick up a working knowledge of the art, though of course, sometimes he is helped with timely advice by his father or other elders of the village. But in the more practical portion of his training he has to depend completely upon himself. Thus, the Bhumij method of training the youth is based on the rigorous application of the theory of self-help.

Even from childhood the boys learn from their older playmates the art of snaring or trapping birds. This is practised more as a pastime than as an occupation. Often a young boy may be seen stealthily approaching the big trees of the village or *sāl* forest or *bundh* near by with his bird-lime.

¹ See Plate III.



PLATE I.



A Ithumij village of Serrakella with its *bandh* in the foreground. The *murgi-ard* ceremony of the village took place near the site marked with a cross (x).

One by one he fixes the thin bamboo splits, made sticky with the boiled juice of *Assattha* trees (*Ficus religiosa*), on the branches of the trees or by the side of the bundh and it is not unusual for some unhappy tiny bird to get entangled in them. He is also early trained in the use of the bow and arrow or bolt which are employed in piercing or stunning the birds at first.¹ Later in life this knowledge is utilised in hunting big as well as small games. Angling is another favourite pursuit of the Bhumij boys.

From their grannies, through folk-tales, the Bhumij boys learn the tribal lore and gain insight into the manners and customs of the people. But this branch of learning continues far into the adult life.

Now, if we pause and analyse the mode of imparting education among this unsophisticated people we, at once, become conscious of an attempt at bringing knowledge before young minds in the shape of pastimes. All the important arts of life they learn through play—they play with the bow and arrow, they play with the gummed sticks and the angling rod. The tending of cattle also provide them with ample opportunities for games. Instead of being subjected to the scolds and threats of a thoughtless and unsympathetic teacher they are tutored, where necessary, by loving relatives and affectionate playmates. Thus, during this part of their life, they are never disturbed in their natural inclinations.

So long we have been concerned with the education of the boys only. The girls also have the same vehicle of training but their lot in life is harder than that of the boys. They are early trained in the duties of a good housewife by the mother. A considerable portion of their time is spent in looking after the children of the house—generally younger brothers and sisters. They also begin to help their mothers in all their household duties from early life, and thus get little or no opportunity for indulging in the playful tendencies of young life.

Marriage

Except in unusual cases of extremely indigent condition every Bhumij youth fondly cherishes the idea of securing a suitable bride and establishing a household of his own. So also is the expectation of every Bhumij girl unless, she is physically defective. But the rapacious tendencies of unfeeling fathers often strike at the very root of these youthful fancies and leave maidens of mature age to pine before the amorous looks of young bridegrooms. Thus, among the Bhumijas physical defects or greed of guardians stand in the way of girls while indigent circumstances often raise obstacles before the youths.

Among the Bhumijas there is no fixed age for marriage at present. Children of tender years are sometimes found enjoying in ignorance the bliss of married life, while bachelors and maidens, who have sufficiently advanced in years, are met with, pining in the shade of social neglect. In Chatusai, a small village near the town of Seraikella, a girl of seven years was found to have been married while about five or six maidens of about 17 to 19 years of age encircled and chatted with me when I visited the village. As soon as I perceived them to be unmarried I asked the reason from an old widow who was sitting by: promptly came the answer "Bridegrooms are not coming forth with the proper amount of bride-price." Sadly and demurely assented the maidens around me. Here I met a bachelor also of about thirty-five years of age. In Gumardi I found another bachelor of above thirty who came to Calcutta as a labourer for earning his bride-price but fortune did not smile favourably upon him and he returned home to the family of his elder brother. But this has not broken his heart and still he cherishes the hope of earning the requisite amount in course of another expedition after which he expects to secure



a mate. Thus it seems that at present the age of marriage depends more upon the pecuniary condition of the contracting parties than upon any social rule or individual choice.

In case of child-marriage the bride is required to be younger than the bridegroom but in adult marriage this rule may not be strictly observed and this does not evoke any unfavourable criticism. The usual age of marriage of the Bhumij boys varies between twenty and twenty-five while that of the girls between fourteen and sixteen when they attain puberty. Unlike their Hindu neighbours the Bhumijas do not look upon marriage after menstruation as disgraceful.

The introduction of child-marriage in the Bhumij society seems to be the effect of association with Hindu culture. This is only a particular instance of a general tendency of imitating Hindu manners and customs especially by the richer section of the tribal people of Chota Nagpur, Orissa and Western Bengal. Sir Herbert Risley also scented this tendency in this area and referred to it in *The People of India*. Before British occupation these tracts of Chota Nagpur and Orissa were not inhabited by the Hindus in large numbers owing to their distance from the then culture-centres and also on account of their impenetrable virgin forests. Moreover, these places were not within easy access then due to difficulties of communication. But after British occupation and the opening of the different railway lines these forests proved to the builder and railway engineer inexhaustible sources of good timber. This resulted in the partial denudation of the forest which made it fit for civilised habitation. Access also became easier and the Hindu merchants and mahajans (bankers) followed by farmers began to invade the area and in a short time the simple folks of the forest silently retreated further into the hitherto untrodden tracts leaving a few settlements here and there. These remnants of the indigenous population now came under the fascinating influence of triumphant Hinduism and could not resist the impact of this new culture. Thus the

work which was begun in Western Bengal and to a certain extent was completed there, has been extended to Chota Nagpur and Orissa Tributary Mahals where Hinduism, with its peculiarly slow, silent and steady methods, has found fertile plains and 'pastures new.' But the more freedom-loving section of the tribal peoples, who retreated before the oncoming rush of Hindu culture and British domination, and found shelter in the mountain recesses and sál forests, began to set up strong barriers in the form of social taboos for the protection of their own society and culture. We have found instances of this among the Hos inhabiting the interior parts of Kutehan and have referred to it in our monograph on the Hos.

In the selection of a bride the Bhumij parents are guided by two principles, namely, the personal beauty of the girl and the existence in this world of the bride's parents. The great discriminating factors of a bride's beauty are the condition of her nose and complexion. Fine nose and fair complexion are valuable assets for a Bhumij girl in the marriage market as they considerably increase the bride-price. More important than the factor of personal beauty is the existence of her parents in this world. The Bhumij bridegroom always fondly expects a hearty welcome from his parents-in-law whenever he visits their house. Who will carefully feed him with nice things if his mother-in-law is not alive? Who will take care of him if his father-in-law has already departed from this world? These considerations exert a great deal of influence in the selection of a bride among the Bhumijas. The bride-price also depends upon these two factors.

The usual means of securing wife in Bhumij society is by purchase. Neither money nor dowry in any form is given to the bridegroom. As among other patrilineal tribes Bhumij girls, who go to live with their husbands, after marriage, and thus form

Means of securing wife.



PLATE II.



A Bhuiya domestic of Seruket—showing the wall and huts.

additional helping hands in the family, are regarded by their fathers, as valuable assets, not to be parted with, except for some consideration either in cash or in kind. Among the Bhumajs the amount of bride-price is not fixed. It varies according to the status and pecuniary circumstances of the contracting parties as also according to the personal beauty of the bride and the existence or non-existence of her parents in this world. The amount varies between Rs. 40 and Rs. 80 in cash and a pair or more of cattle.

Sometimes the payment is made in cash alone and in such cases it ranges between Rs. 40 - and Rs. 70 - only. Whether payment can be made in cattle alone, we are not sure of, as none of our informants did refer to it. In the arrangements for marriage the settlement of bride price is made at an early stage as it forms one of the most important items of the business. The amount is payable before the actual marriage ceremony. The whole sum may be handed over at once or it may be paid by instalments. Sometimes, when both the parties are willing, the money may be paid by instalments even after the marriage ceremony. If in such a case, for some reason or other, the whole or a portion of the bride-price be not paid, it does not in any way affect the connubial tie, as among some other tribes, nor does it impair the paternal rights over the issues of such unions. The proceeds of the bride-price, according to one of our female informants, is spent in the purchase of ornaments and clothes for the bride and articles necessary for a feast to the guests and villagers. This feast is given on the day following that of marriage. If any thing is saved from the bride-price it goes to her father or in his absence to the guardian. According to the other informants the bride-price is received in the first instance by her father and in his absence by her brother or guardian. A portion of it is, no doubt, spent in the purchase of ornaments and clothes for the bride but they do not refer to any compulsory feast nor do they speak of its wholesale expenditure.

in the above way. On the other hand they hint at the avarice of brides' fathers who try to amass a fortune out of their daughters' price.

With the increase in the price of the other necessities of life the bride-price in Bhumij society has, in due deference to the laws of economics, gone up in recent years. This has placed the poorer section of the tribe in a precarious condition as they are unable to purchase wives now-a-days. The Bhumij father of ordinary means can hardly pay the necessary bride-price for each of his sons. So, usually it is the eldest son who marries at the expense of the father while the other sons have to earn their bride-price themselves. This drives them often to the coal fields and factories or to Calcutta where they work as day labourers which indirectly influences the age of marriage for the boys.

Though purchase is the usual mode of securing mates yet there are two or three other means of getting them. When a young man settles his mind on a suitable girl and when he is not sure of favourable reception from her father or guardian, he usually resorts to either of the following two methods for forcing the hands of her guardians. He secures the help of some of his young friends and relatives and seizes the girl at the market-place, in a fair or on a festive occasion and forcibly carries her to his own home. This is locally known as (*matant*). As soon as the girl's own people come to know of this, her father together with a few friends and relatives repairs to the house of the abductor and settles the bride-price which in such cases is higher than usual. The union is ratified by payment of the bride-price followed by the performance of the usual ceremonial rites. But if the parties cannot amicably come to any agreement about the price the matter is referred to the *Pāc* (*Pañcāyat*) the decision of which seems to be final though not binding. Where the decision of the *Pāc* is not agreeable to the parties the girl is returned to her guardians and she may be married to any other man

in the usual way. Abduction does not entail any social stigma on the girl. During the period of forced confinement the girl is neither molested nor any encroachment made on her modesty.

The second method of forcing the unwilling guardians is of a more drastic nature and ceremonially impairs the virginity of the girl for ever. According to this method the young lover lies in ambush by the way to the market or approaches the girl in a fair or festival and applies vermilion paint on her forehead. Immediately after this he makes good his escape as otherwise the girl's people may give him a good thrashing which often takes a serious turn. Now the girl's father with some of his friends and relatives goes to the house of the lover and settles the bride-price which in this case also is higher than usual. In case of non-agreement the matter is reported to the *Patil* whose decision is final though not binding as before. If both the parties agree about the amount of bride-price and other details the ceremony takes place in the usual way after payment of the price. But if they cannot come to any arrangement the girl remains with her father but it is very difficult to find a husband for her as she is regarded to have been half married and 'spoiled.' A social stigma attaches to her and to any one who marries her. Thus, usually, in such cases, the girl's party come to some sort of agreement with the abductor and thereby save itself from an awkward position.

In the first method the bride's people sometimes offer great resistance and a free fight ensues between the parties. In the second method also this is more usual. But when the young man is loved by the girl of his choice the matter becomes easier for him as he is indirectly helped by her.

Now-a-days *tandān* has become a very favourite method with the *Rhums*. On account of the implicity of the reductive nature of the girl so abducted and also on account of the higher price it brings the method has lately become

very popular with the fathers of marriageable girls. It not only satisfies their cupidity but also enters to the parental pride. So, now-a-days, even where the preliminaries of marriage are settled amicably, the father of the bride sends information to the bridegroom's party that he is sending his daughter to such and such a place and that she may be seized and taken home according to the *lanā'm* method. Thus, here we meet with a custom which has been and is still of real import, gradually crystallising into a fiction. One of my informants, Tiri Sardar the Bhumij *maga* (priest) of Panlā, secured his wife by actual seizure.

Such forcible marriage is not the monopoly of the Bhumijas alone, the Hos, Santals and Mundas also take recourse to it whenever necessary. But among them, as far as I know, it is always resorted to in earnest.

Among the Bhumijas there are both endogamous and exogamous divisions. *Clan-ex-gamy* is prevalent among them. Marriage with the mother's sister is not allowed. Wife's elder sister cannot be married and there cannot be any sort of jocose relationship with her. She is looked upon as a superior and is treated in that light. Two brothers may marry two sisters without any restriction—the younger may marry the elder sister while the elder brother the younger one. But when a man marries two sisters he must espouse the hand of the elder one first and then that of the younger one. Cross-cousin marriage of both the types, i.e., with the maternal uncle's daughter as well as with the paternal aunt's daughter, is in vogue.

Though marriage is usually adult among the Bhumijas, match-making is not in the hands of the brides or bridegrooms themselves. It is the duty of every Bhumij father to find out a suitable bride for his son as soon as he attains marriageable age. Thus, in Bhumij society, the initiative in match-making is always taken by the fathers of bridegrooms. The father of

The *maga* arranges matches for marriage

PLATE III



From another angle, the same scene is seen.

a girl, among them, thinks it beneath his dignity to hunt for a bridegroom; the marriageable girl is a valuable asset and as marriage transfers her from the family of origin to that of her husband, it is becoming for the father of the bridegroom to seek for such assets. So marriage negotiations begin with a visit from the bridegroom's father to the house of the bride's parents. If the girl appear suitable negotiation is cemented with a feast. A few days after this the bridegroom's father again visits the bride's father's house and settles the bride-price. According to some female informants of Pāndri, a village about two miles to the north west of Serikella town, after the bride price is settled, the father of the bride enters into a formal contract with both the bridegroom and his father. In case the father of the bridegroom is unable or unwilling to pay the bride-price, the bridegroom becomes responsible for the same. Though no written deed is executed, the contract is duly strengthened with witnesses who are generally friends of the parties. But our other informants did not refer to any custom like this. However it may be, if the parties agree to the bride-price, the father of the bridegroom again visits the house of the bride's father for the third time and pays down the amount of bride-price stipulated, in the way as already referred to, and finally fixes the date of marriage. During all these visits he is generally accompanied by one or more of his friends and relatives who are always consulted along with others who remain at home, before any decision is made. As soon as the date of marriage is fixed, the bridegroom's father sends invitation to his relatives and friends residing far and near to attend the ceremony. These guests generally reach the house of their host a day or two before the celebration—each family with one, or if possible more, pots of *hāri* (fermented rice) and we have often seen, in course of our journeys in the tract, long rows of maidens in gala dress proceeding to the house of festivities—each with a pot of *hāri* on the head. It may be mentioned here

that Bhumij males do not carry anything on their head and such presents are usually carried by the females of the family. These pots of *kāra* are added to the already existing stock brewed at home and help to maintain the same degree of hilarity among the assembled guests throughout the days of rejoicings.

Marriage is not celebrated in Bhumij society on any and every day or in any and every month.

*Proper dates are also
not for every day*

There are lucky and unlucky dates as well as months for marriage and dates are fixed

accordingly. According to one of our informants the union should take place on some Wednesday or Friday in the bright half of the month. The other days of the week as well as the dark half of the month are regarded as unlucky. As regards the proper month for marriage, opinion differs. According to a number of female informants of Paplā, marriage is prohibited in the months of Śravan, Bhādra, Āśvin, Kārtik, Agrahayana, and Caitra; all the other months are suitable for it. The actual date of marriage is, according to them settled with the help of a *Gaṇak* (Hindu astrologer). But according to Rama Sardar of Ghūṭusā, a village about three-quarter of a mile from Seraikeḷlā town, the unlucky months for marriage are Āśvin, Kārtik, Paus, and Caitra whereas, though there is no ceremonial prohibition, it does not take place during the months of Āṣāḍh, Śrāvan, and Bhādra, when the agricultural operations engage the Bhumij cultivator above all other things. Moreover, during these months communication becomes difficult owing to the rains and consequent inundation of roads, etc. The auspicious months for marriage, according to him are Baisakh, Jyāistha, Agrahayana, Māgh and Phalgun of which the last is the most desired as at this time the Bhumij is comparatively better off. But strangely enough the Bhumij *oḥā* (medicine man) of Ghūṭusā presented a completely different view of the whole question. According to him there is no

auspicious or inauspicious day or month for marriage. All the days of the week and all the months of the year are equally good for the purpose. The first two views about the proper time for marriage may be reconciled on the ground that Rama Sardar presents the prohibition in a more reasonable fashion while the female informants from Pandra give the more orthodox version. But the opinion of the *ophi* of Ghugusdi is difficult to reconcile with the former ones unless we assume that he propounds the traditional norm of the tribe quite in keeping with his profession. Among the neighbouring Hos, who are still in a tribal stage, there is no such prohibition and it would not be out of mark to assume that this particular trait of their culture has been imported from the Hindus among whom they live.

The actual marriage rites take place always at night and on this point all our informants are agreed. This is interesting from the point that the Hindus of the locality perform these rites during daytime while in Bengal proper these always take place at night. Among the Hos there is no restriction, they may take place either at night or during daytime.

Marriage generally takes place in the house of the bride and on the date already fixed for the purpose. Marriage rites and ceremonies the marriage procession, consisting of the bridegroom himself, his father and sometimes his mother, together with brothers, uncles and other relatives and friends of both the sexes, start for the house of the bride's father. It begins its journey at such an hour as to reach the destination in the evening. But according to the Bhumij informants of Nayagaon the procession is timed to reach the bride's place in the morning. This difference may be due to the lack of any hard and fast rule as regards the time for going through the actual marital rites. So, naturally, where marriage ceremonies are performed at night the procession is timed to reach in the evening and where

they are gone through during the daytime it should reach in the morning. Thus the difference in this custom is really immaterial. However, when the bridal procession reach the village it does not enter it at once but generally stop outside under some tree where the bride's father together with his friends and relatives—both male and female—and accompanied by musicians playing on *dholki* (drum), *maddi* (another type of drum), *dhak* (another type of drum), etc., meets and accords a grand and formal reception. Thus honoured, the whole party proceed to the house of marriage and stop before its gate. Here the mother of the bride together with the female relatives and friends again receives the bridegroom. In one hand she carries a lit-up earthen lamp and in the other she holds a vessel, either of earth or metal, containing *atap* (sun-dried) rice and *chikka pathi*. The latter is made of rice-powder mixed with water and fried in mustard oil. The bride's mother holds the lamp before the bridegroom's face with her left hand and touches his lips with *chikka pathi* with her right hand. This finished, she kisses the bridegroom on his cheek. One by one all the other women accompanying her kiss him in their turn. After this the bride's mother encircles the groom three with a thread, one end of which remains in the hand of a woman standing before the groom,—the other women also standing around him hold the thread at different points. It is next removed and preserved in the family. Next the bride's mother, followed one after another by all the women present, salutes the bridegroom by prostrating before him, which he returns in the same fashion, in turn. At the end of this the ladies retire and the bride's brother makes his entrance and carries the groom on his hip to the marriage booth (*mandap*) from the gate.

The marriage booth, constructed for the occasion, is of a rectangular shape and consists of a roof of *sāl* leaves resting on four bamboo posts. At the foot of each of these posts is placed an earthen lamp fed with ghee (clarified

PLATE IV



The seat of Labor Dislike, Padua, near Bergamo.

butter).¹ In the centre of the booth is constructed a small earthen platform of rectangular shape, raised about 2 or 2½ feet from the ground and spoken of as *vedi* by the Bhumijās.² The western part of this platform is occupied by the bride and the bridegroom who face eastward. The Brahmin priest, who is usually in this tract an inhabitant of the village Bijayi, sits to the right of the bridal couple. A fire is made on this platform and the Brahmin priest performs the *hom-yag* rite by pouring clarified butter on this fire along with the recitation of *mantras* (sacred texts). At present *hom-yag* is considered to be the most essential rite in the ceremony. It is followed by *sindur-tan* in which the bridegroom and the bride apply vermillion paint on each other's forehead. It is performed without the help of the Brahmin priest. This rite of *sindur-tan*, which, among other Pre-Dravidian tribes of the locality, is regarded as the most essential and binding portion of the marriage ceremony, is not so considered among the Bhumijās now-a-days. Its place has been taken by the *h-m-yag* in apparent imitation of the Hindu rite of *kusandhan* which also forms the most binding portion of the Hindu marriage ceremony. The rite of *sampatān*, another important part of the Hindu marriage ritual, as also the other minor rites are not even heard of among the Bhumijās.

The Brahmin priest, already spoken of, who officiates in the Bhumij marriage ritual, is recruited, in the locality, from a few of the degraded Brahmin families of Bijayi. The regular Brahmins of the place do not socially associate with these families who are regarded to have fallen from their rank. They generally marry among and dine with such other families residing in other places but their number seemed very small as we could not find any other village with such a family within a radius of about ten miles. The services of these

¹ It may be noted that *vedi* and *expiation* are borrowed by the Bhumijās. The present situation seems to be an adoption from the Hindus.

² This term also seems to have been borrowed from the Hindus.

Brahmin priests are requisitioned only in course of marriage and funeral ceremonies and they have no part to play in any other Bhumij social or religious rite-in many of which the *nayā* or the tribal priest figures prominently. Thus the ceremony of *hom-yig*, an essentially Hindu rite, together with its performer, the Brahmin priest, seems to be a recent introduction into Bhumij society and forms an ideal example of the cautious method of Hinduism, adopted to convert the tribal peoples. These Brahmins also serve the Kurmis and eat from the hands of both these peoples.¹

Bhumij marriage is always attended with much merry-making. Dancing and singing go on for days together and the guests are always and everywhere enlivened with cups of *haḍid*, a great quantity of which is consumed in every such ceremony. The women dance and the males play on *ḍholki* (drum), *mḍal* (drum) and other musical instruments. Dancing is almost always accompanied by singing and they have a special set of marriage songs of which a specimen is given below. This particular piece seems to be the wailing of one who has been unfortunate in his love affairs.

In Bhumij language :—

“ Heḥhe seingei jvultāṣ hār kunure
 Kanāte ombro seingele ene gā iyā
 Dukh kajiro koyā pate āro
 Engā apo orāte chenojān hāya hāya
 Gai jāndo koī sangeto akachānoya.”

The same song in mixed Oriyā and Bengali —

“ Tuḥer āgun jvaliche dugunē
 Kidle kiśe nibhaya kake kahī hā dukh ke pāteyāya,
 Mā bāper gharke gele kare hāya hāya
 Mari gele re dukh ki sānge jāya.”

¹ Cf. Varṇa Brahmins of Bengal who serve some of the lowest castes such as the Namasudras, Kumbhars and others.

Freely translated into English it runs thus—

"The fire fed with the husks of paddy is burning with redoubled force; how is it to be quenched? To whom shall I tell my sorrows and who will believe it? Going to the parents' house even, I weep. Does sorrow accompany even after death?"

If marriage is performed in the morning the bridal procession begins its return journey in the evening together with the united couple. After reaching home the bridegroom puts an iron wristlet on the left hand of the bride which she carries till the death of her husband or divorce. This custom also reminds us of the Hindu married woman's iron wristlet (*nod, lod or lohā*).

Re-marriage is allowed in the Bhumij community. Young widows, willing to take a second husband, leave their dead husbands' house and go to their fathers' place whence they are re-married according to the *sāṅgā* rite. The price for a widow varied formerly from Rs 3 to Rs 5 but in the year we visited (February, 1926) the tract it suddenly rose up to Rs 10 or even to Rs. 12. The Bhumij elders were at a loss to find the cause of this sudden increase. In addition to this price which goes to the widow's father or her guardian in the paternal line, her mother is entitled to a piece of cloth. Re-marriage often takes place between widowers and widows though bachelors are not barred from such unions. If a Bhumij widow with children wish to be re-married she has to leave the children in the house of their father.

Divorce is allowed in Bhumij society and divorced women may re-marry according to the *sāṅgā* rite.

Death and Funeral.

Both cremation and burial are practised by the Bhumijas. As among the Hos, the difficulty of procuring firewood often compels the poor to abandon cremation, the customary method of disposal and

Disposal of the dead

they resort to burial. But the richer section invariably cremates the dead bodies of adults while the children, both of the rich and the poor, are buried alike. One of our informants Ram Sardar, an elderly villager of Ghatumai, gave a completely different version of the whole affair. According to him the different *gotras*¹ of the Baumiyas have different modes of disposal of the dead. In his *gotra*—that of *Kun*²—the dead body is clothed with a piece of cloth, large or small according to the means of the family. A grave is dug in the bed of a river under water. The dead body is placed in it and covered with sand. It does not matter if the body come out of this resting place through removal of sand by the current of the river. Excepting the piece of cloth, mentioned above, no other article is buried with the body. This account becomes more interesting when we remember that the *gotra* which practises it is named after a kind of fish. Is it due to the belief that the dead members of the *gotra* go to join their *thiungs* (agnates) under water after leaving this world? To establish the authenticity of this account, further enquiry is necessary.

In case of a death the whole *gotra* or clan observes mourning for ten days. If members of the same *gotra* reside in other villages, as is usually the case, information is sent to them where possible and they also have to observe mourning for the period. During these days of mourning all the members of the *gotra* may not eat or otherwise use fish, meat, mustard oil, clarified butter and turmeric. Ornaments, vermilion and bordered or coloured clothes are tabooed to the widow for the remaining part of her life or until she remarries. Widows are required to wear white clothes without border. This also seems to be borrowed from the Hindus. By the way, it may be mentioned that Bhumij girls, married or unmarried,

¹ *Gotra* is a Sanskrit word and there is a Sanskrit word *gotra*.

¹ Eurytemnos sections.

² A kind of fish (*Bohol*).

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The place where Paeon is worshipped at Paeoniae Sanctuaries

may wear any kind of ornament but vermilion is applied only by the married women both on the centre of the forehead as well as at the parting of the hair.

After ten days of mourning the *Itakanān* takes place when the *blanlari* (Hindu barber) shaves and pares the nails of all the members of the family. The washerman also cleanses the clothes of the family on this day. The Brahmin priest, already referred to performs the *homa yag* ceremony in a fire, kindled on a raised earthen platform known as *cedi*, by pouring clarified butter and reciting *mantras* (holy texts) along with it. This finishes the ordinary funeral ceremony of the Bhumiya. But according to Birsing Sardar of Chumapali, Bhumiya funeral ceremonies do not come to an end here. Those who wish to follow strictly, according to him the traditional customs of the tribe, preserve some pieces of charred bones from the funeral pyre in an earthen pot. Conveniently these are carried to the ancestral ossuary of the *gotra*. Each of the *gotras* is said to have an ossuary in the village originally inhabited by its ancestors. Thus the *Nay gotra* has its ossuary at Dugdha and the *Kharisa gotra* at Cokahatu*. There the remains are carried and interred. But the observance of this custom has, now-a-days, become rare and many of our informants could hardly remember the names of their ancestral villages. The location of such villages was still more difficult; they were spoken of as situated far far away. In fact, we did not meet with a single Bhumiya ossuary in the State of Seraikella though we found Ho

* Cokahatu the name of a village in the Bannu & Tiana of the British records has a very large burial ground covering about seven acres of land and containing more than 1,000 sepulchres above ground. It is situated on the border-land of British and Muhammadan India. It seems to be the burial ground of a kind of the Mundas and not of a tribe. Among the Bhumiya of Manbhurn there are several groups of graves. Among them one separate group of ground is devoted to each *gotra* of group of 17 or 18 villages which is usually the residence of one *Kul*-slope. Now of course the *Kuls* have scattered everywhere in course of their migrations though in their original places of residence they are still considered as *Kuls*.

District Gazetteer—Ranchi District, p. 26741. See also *Hindu Times and Currents of Bengal*, Vol. I, p. 125, Footnote L.

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ossuaries almost at every step. The Bhumij ancestral villages are important even from another point of view. They have now become associated with particular social groups and regulate marital relations to a certain extent.¹

¹ See *infra* Chapter II, Social Organisation, p. 31

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL ORGANISATION

As far as our evidences show the internal structure of the Bhumij society does not differ in principle from that of the Hos or Mundās—their neighbours and congeners. In the State of Seraikella we met with three main social divisions of the tribe based on locality, viz., (a) Tamariā or Barabhumia, (b) Desi or Singhbhumia and (c) Dhaluā or Dhalbhumia. Sir H. H. Risley in *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*¹ mentions six such divisions, viz., (1) Deshi, (2) Tamariā, (3) Sikhariyā, (4) Patkumia, (5) Shelo, and (6) Barabhumia. One of these namely Shelo, according to him, derives its origin from occupation.

The members of each of the divisions mentioned by us were, according to our informants, once inhabiting the particular tract from which they derived their name. The Tamariās derived their name from Tamar, a pargana in the district of Ranchi, the Desi or Singhbhumia from Singhbhum and the Dhaluā or Dhalbhumia from Dhalbhum. Of the three divisions, the Tamariās are regarded to be socially superior to the other two. It has already become an endogamous body and has prohibited all sorts of social intercourse, e. g., interlining and intermarriage, with the other two and seems to be far advanced on the path to caste-organisation. The Desi and the Dhaluā Bhumijas intermarry and interline but if any member of these two divisions happen to have any social connection, such as marriage or dining, with the Tamariās he is forthwith excommunicated. This attitude of the Desi and

¹ Risley - *Tribes and Castes of Bengal* Vol. II App. I p. 12

the Dhalua Bhumjas, who acquiesce in their own inferiority to the Samarias, may have evolved as a measure of retaliation.*

Each of these local divisions is again divided into a number of exogamous sections known as *gotras*. The term appears to have been borrowed from the vocabulary of their Hindu neighbours. In their own tongue the exogamous division is called *kur*, and in this sense it is used by the Hos and Mundas of the region. The use of the term *gotra* by the Bhumjas is suggestive of their greater assimilation of Hindu culture in comparison with the Hos and Mundas who, though acquainted with the term, never use it. The relation between the *kur*s and the territorial divisions mentioned above, is not of a definitely fixed nature. Any *kur* is not specially associated with any one of these local divisions. Members of the same *kur* are found in more than one local division. Thus it seems that the territorial divisions are chronologically later than the *kur*s which are the fundamental social units. Moreover, now a days, members of the territorial divisions are not inhabiting the tract after which they are known.

We cannot definitely state the number of Bhumji *kur*s or *gotras* and our informants could only supply the following list which is, no doubt, an incomplete one:

1. Kharnā
2. Rūn
3. Koyalī or Koyāl

* In the district of Singbhum the Bhumjas preponderate in the Jhalbhum Pargana where they number 4,100. In Magbhum they have become Hinduised speaking the Bengali language and following the customs and traditions of Bengalis. Members of Singbhum still manage to preserve and speak the language distinct of Mundas. In Dhalbhum, however, the Bhumjas were not joined to the other groups connected with the Mundas, Hos or Santals. They are distinguished by the fact that the Deshs who are believed to be the original inhabitants of the country ranking first the Barabhumas and Sikharas rank second the Lakh and third and the Tarkas last. Each sub-caste has its own Panchayat. Barabhumas the name of a famous station in the south of Manbhum. Lakhon is also the name of a Pargana and village in the district of Magbhum. The village of this name is 82 miles to the north of the Dumka peak. Singbhum District Gazetteer p. 101.

PLATE VI



(a)

(b)

A Kumar (a) and a Bhanno (b) are going out with bows and arrows for bird-shooting

4. Uru
5. Hasda
6. Bārda
7. Sāṇḍi
8. Pāeri
9. Hembrom
10. Dooda
11. Nag
12. Birjila
13. Kamal
14. Tāo
15. Sālkāpar
16. Soārī

The Bhumij *gotra*-names indicate some kind of bird, beast, insect, plant, or some inanimate object and are totemistic in nature. The members of a *gotra* are required to observe taboos in connection with the object after which they are known. Generally it is not to be touched or used as food if edible, and should not be injured in any way. Thus Nag is the name of a *gotra* among the Bhumijās and one of its members gave me to understand that the people of this *gotra* do not kill or injure the cobra. It is believed that the cobra also, in turn, does not bite the members of this *gotra* because they are *bhāyāds* or agnates. When I pressed the informant and expressed doubt regarding the nature of the cobra he retorted, "Well, brothers also, when angry, kill each other." Similarly, Birjila is the name of a *gotra* and it indicates a kind of stag which is not killed or injured by the members of this *gotra*. Rui or Robit fish is the name of another *gotra* and it is not killed or eaten by its members. Kamal or lotus flower is the name of another *gotra* and its members refrain from eating the edible root of the plant nor do they cull these flowers. Tāo, a kind of bird which utters a sound like *tāo tāo*, and koyāl or koyālā, the cuckoo, are the names of two

other *gotras* and they are neither ensnared nor eaten by the people of their respective *gotras*. *Uru* is a kind of black insect found on the banks of the *bundhs* (big natural or semi-natural reservoirs) which gives its name to a *kili*, the members of which are barred from injuring it. *Salkāpar* or *Shwal* piece is the name of another *gotra* the members of which may not use it. *Soari* or palanquin forms the name of another *gotra* the members of which may not be carried on it.

Thus, though our list is short, we find all kinds of objects included in it. Though the *Bhumijas* abstain from using, injuring, killing or eating the objects after which their *gotras* are named, they do not appear to worship or make obeisance to them. The object after which the *gotra* is known is a *bhāyad* or agnate, as already referred to, and is to be treated as such. This idea is very clearly indicated by *Ram Sardār* of *Ghūṭasāi* in connection with the funeral customs of his *gotra*. He belonged to the *Rai gotra* and the dead persons of his *gotra* are said to be buried in the sand bed of a river under water, so that they may join their *bhāyadda*, namely the *rohāt* fish under water. However improbable this custom may appear it has sound reasoning behind it. Thus the *Bhumij* totems are not objects of worship but are only agnatic comrades in life and after. The *Bhumijas* have assimilated, no doubt, a greater amount of Hindu culture than the *Hos* of the locality but still they have preserved the totemistic nature of their *gotras* in a higher degree than the *Hos* among whom the import of the *kili* name together with the associated taboos have almost completely disappeared.

Many of the *Bhumij gotra*-names also appear as such among other tribes of the tract, e.g., *Santal*, *Munda*, *Ho*, *Lohar*, *Bhuiyā*, *Birhor*, *Asura*, etc., and also among some of the Hindu castes which had apparently been recruited from among these tribal peoples, e.g., *Mahli*, *Kurmi*, *Lohar*, *Pan*, *Pator*, etc. Of the various objects indicating *gotras*, some appear to be uncommonly favoured and command wide distribution

Thus the Nag or cobra as the name of a *gotra* or *kuli* appears among the Mundas, Santals, Auras, Bhuiyās, Bhumijās, Birhors, Pans, Paters and many others. Hada and Hembrom also occur among a good many tribes and castes.

Each of the Bhumij *gotras* or *kulis* has a traditional ancestral village of its own, the name of which it bears along with the name of the *gotra* or *kuli*. Thus the Kharisā *gotra* has Cokahāta for its ancestral village and the Nag and Rui *gotras* have Dugdhā and Hajam Bontā respectively. Marriage is not only prohibited among members of the same *gotra* but it is also strictly forbidden among persons having the same ancestral village. These ancestral villages were, according to our informants, the original habitats of the *gotras* from which particular families migrated long ago. But the connection with the ancestral home of these migrating families was of such an intimate and cherishing nature that they have, to this day, preserved it in two ways. Firstly, marriage is prohibited among persons having the same ancestral village. This may be due to the fact that the ancestral village had only one *gotra* residing in it and so, families migrating from such a village were barred from matrimonial connection more on account of the identity of their *gotra* than by reason of the same ancestral village. But on this point we are not sure as our informants could not definitely state whether each *gotra* had a separate ancestral village of its own or not.¹ Secondly, after cremation a few pieces of the charred bones are preserved and carried, according to convenience, to the ancestral village of the *gotra* to be buried in the ancestral ossuary of the *gotra* situated therein. It is owing to this custom that we did not meet with a single ossuary of the Bhumijās in the tract though the Hos, their congeners, have got them in sufficient numbers.

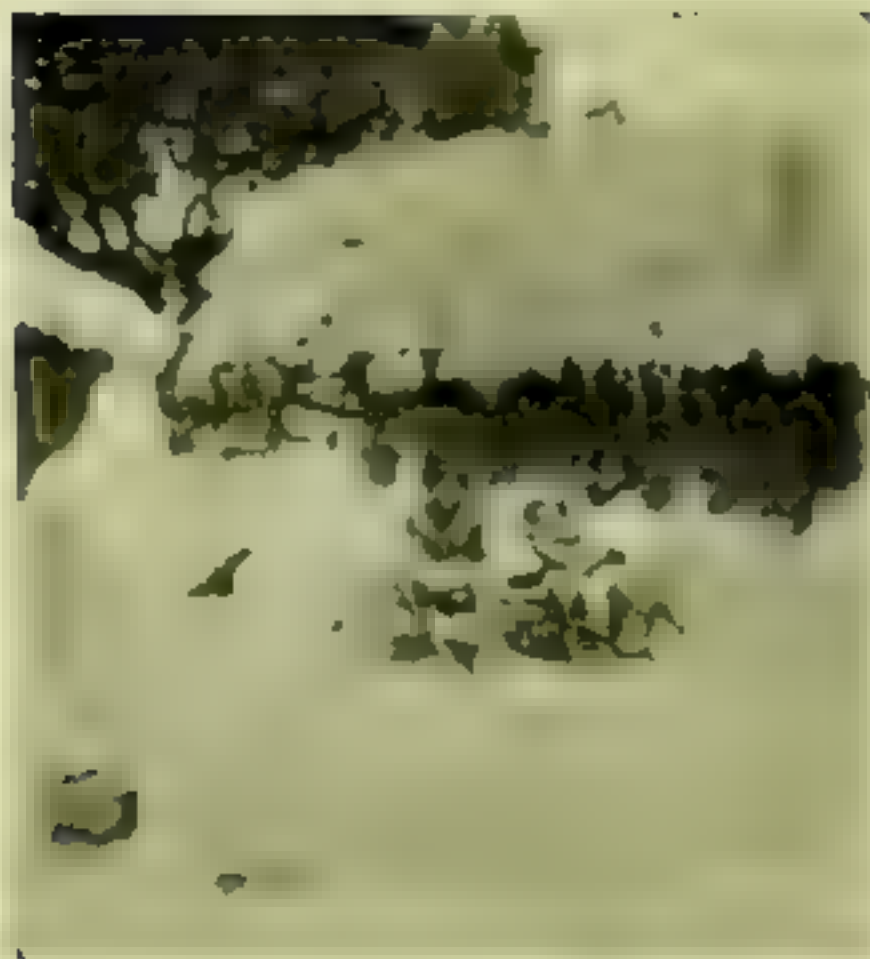
The Bhumij *gotra* is a patrilineal group which descends from father to children. It has no religious or economic function of its own. Between the clan and the family we did not meet with any intermediate grouping.

¹ See footnote 1 on page 22.

The family among the Bhumjas is patrilineal, patrilocal and patripotestal. The family name, if there be any, descends from father to son. The wife, after marriage, comes to live with the husband in his father's house. The father is the central figure in the family and is its head in social and political affairs. In social affairs invitations are issued to him only which cover the other members of the family as well. He represents the family in the village *Panchayat* and he alone in the family owns property which he can sell or mortgage or otherwise dispose as he likes. The moral teachings of the tribe also invests him with a favourable position. Absolute obedience is required of the children in addition to love and respect. The administration of the family purse is also in his hand. Thus his position in the Bhumij society seems to be an enviable one. But most of these powers practically pass out of his hands when he grows old and incapable and the sons come to age and manage the family affairs. Yet, even during this period, theoretically, he is the head and really enjoys love and respect from all the members in undiminished degree.

The average Bhumij family consists of the parents together with sons and their wives and children. Unmarried daughters also live in the paternal family but leave it soon after marriage after which they may pay occasional visits. The sons, after marriage, do not necessarily leave the parental roof but live together with the father. But there are cases of sons living separately from father during his lifetime. After the death of the father the brothers may live together but usually those who are grown up and married, separate and set up independent houses for themselves. The unmarried brothers and sisters live with one or other of the married brothers according to their inclination and convenience. When they in their turn get married the sisters leave for their husbands' house and the brothers set up separate households for themselves.

PLATE VII



Mr. Suter at the fishing pond of Pandra, with his wife and
child—Serekelu.

CHAPTER III

THE TERMINOLOGY OF RELATIONSHIP

The Bhumij terms of relationship, dealt with here, were collected according to the genealogical method from three independent groups of informants residing in two separate villages, namely Ghutusi and Ghumandi. Ghutusi is about three quarters of a mile to the north of the town of Serakulia, while Ghumandi is a mile and a half farther north. In each case the terms were collected from fairly grown up persons who were corroborated or corrected by other persons, both old and young, who usually surrounded us on our appearance in any village. Thus the possibilities of error were greatly minimised. In spite of these precautions some discrepancies still occur between the different informants which are more or less linguistic than morphological. Thus, at Ghutusi father's elder brother is known as *kuku* whereas at Ghumandi he is *gungu ābā*. Similarly Ghutusi has *āi* and *āi* for father's father and father's mother, while Ghumandi has *baphāqī* and *nanā* respectively. Ghutusi applies the term *tālā* to the wife's brother, while, Ghumandi has *baī haīar* or *sāhan kārā*. Husband's sister is known as *āi bendarī* at Ghutusi and *dāi* or *nanad* at Ghumandi. *Natun* and *Jat kumār* are respectively used at Ghutusi and Ghumandi for the son's-son's wife, etc. But these discrepancies are more apparent than real. They can be easily explained on the ground of the degree of adoption and assimilation of Hindu culture. The language of their Hindu neighbours has not failed to leave its imprint on these terms. Instances of adoption from Bengali language are many, e.g., *bhāgnā*, *bhāgnī*, *masī*, *mosd*, *bau*, *banāi*, *nati*, *putarā*, *phār*, *dē r*, *jomai*, etc. Many Hindusthani terms have also found their way into the list.



But these borrowings have not, in the least, affected the conceptual frame of Bhumj terminology of relationship. As in a beautiful mosaic work the different pieces of stone are set to form a pattern the design of which is already existing in the mind of the architect so the Bengali terms only, without any contextual meaning, were adopted in a frame existing from timeimmemorial.

Owing to unavoidable circumstances each of the lists of relationship terms has suffered from certain omissions. But this does not indicate that the relations in question have no appellation at the places where the collections were made. The three lists, when collated together, present a more or less complete catalogue.

The Bhumj terminology of relationship is substantially based on the classificatory system. In four instances only, viz., father, mother, husband and wife, we meet with independent descriptive terms. Most of the other relations are grouped together by generation while classification by blood or marriage is not always maintained.

Now, let us examine the data. Following Dr. Rivers' method of analysis as advocated in *Kinship and Social Organization* we may guess certain social conditions which prevailed at the time when these terms were coming into force and those conditions were directly or indirectly instrumental in giving the Bhumj terminology of relationship its present shape. One such social condition is the prevalence of marriage by exchange which seems to have been, at one stage of Bhumj social development, a very important phenomenon of far reaching consequence. It is evidenced by the use of single terms for each of the following ten pairs of relations.

- (1) Sister and wife's brother's wife.
- (2) Brother and wife's sister's husband.
- (3) Sister and husband's brother's wife.
- (4) Brother and husband's sister's husband.

- (5) Mother's brother and father's sister's husband
- (6) Father's brother and mother's sister's husband.
- (7) Father's sister and mother's brother's wife.
- (8) Mother's sister and father's brother's wife
- (9) Father's brother's son and mother's sister's son.
- (10) Father's sister's son and mother's brother's son

In addition to these ten cases of correspondence a typical instance of *marriage by exchange* would influence four other pairs of relations in the same way as before — these are

- (1) Wife's sister and brother's wife
- (2) Sister's husband and wife's brother.
- (3) Husband's brother and sister's husband
- (4) Brother's wife and husband's sister.

Among the Bhumijax each of the relations mentioned in the four pairs stated above has an independent term and thus our proposition is weakened to this extent. Nevertheless the case is not so hopeless as it may appear at the first sight. The absence of correspondence of terms for relations mentioned in pairs Nos. 1 and 3 above, indicates the existence of marriage by exchange to the extent of one brother and one sister only from each of the contracting families. This highly artificial condition is refuted in the very next step by the correspondence of terms in the following pairs —

- (a) Father's brother and mother's sister's husband.
- (b) Mother's sister and father's brother's wife

The remaining two pairs of relations with dissimilar terms, namely,

- (2) Sister's husband and wife's brother,
- (4) Brother's wife and husband's sister.

apparently strike at the very root of our hypothesis. These two pairs completely deny the prevalence of marriage by exchange—a case which cannot ably stand against the



cumulative strength of the ten cases of correspondence narrated on pages 30-31. Moreover, it is quite possible that the dissimilarity of terms between the brother's wife and husband's sister is due to defective collection of materials because the terms for brother's wife as shown here are in relation to a male while the other term of the pair is in relation to a female. The difference in the attitude of the male and the female in the case of 'brother's wife' has been accentuated to a greater degree by another social factor, namely junior levirate which prevails among the Bhumjās. That this is no mere guess is evidenced by the use of the term *bahu* indicating 'wife' to the elder brother's wife in all the three sets of collection. The difference in the remaining pair namely 'sister's husband and wife's brother' may be laid at the feet of unassimilated borrowings from the kinship terminology of the more cultured neighbours, as has been done in other spheres of life.

Our proposal is further strengthened by the use of the terms *bhānjā* and *bhājur* for son and daughter respectively of the sister, as well as of the wife's (or husband's) brother. In the same way the terms *putarā* and *jhārī* applied respectively to the son and daughter of the elder brother and of the wife's (or husband's) elder sister, convince us as to the feasibility of our hypothesis. The application of the terms *putarā* and *jhārī* to the son and daughter respectively of the wife's younger sister and of the husband's younger brother, though, stands on our way can be explained in the following manner. Both these anomalies are reported from the same village namely Ghugashā and by the same witness. The other man of the village does not give any term at all, while the witnesses from Ghumāqdī deny the existence of any independent term in one case, namely for wife's younger sister's son and daughter who are, according to them, of the same status as own children, whereas in the case of husband's younger brother's son and daughter they have given the proper terms (*ciz*, *gungā* and *jethī*) according to our system.



PLATE VIII



Hagra Bhumi of Ghata.

Measurements.—Stature—159.5, Head depth—17.5, Head breadth—17.4,
Head height—14.5, Nose length—3.0, Nose breadth—5.1

The contradiction that appears in the application of the terms *bhāṅnā* and *bhāṅnī* for the son and daughter respectively of the husband's elder brother at Ghumāṇḍi and of the husband's sister at both the places—Ghutusaṅ and Ghumāṇḍi—is more apparent than real. In the former case the woman has traced the relationship through herself while in the latter case she has traced it through her husband. Such anomalies are not rare in the Bhumij terminology and mark out the transitional nature of their culture.

Though marriage by exchange has left such indelible marks on the Bhumij terminology of relationship it does not seem to have been practised by the same families consecutively for more than one generation. Had that been the case *cross-cousin marriage* would have resulted. Cross-cousin marriage, when extensively practised for a long time, affects the terms of relationship by evolving common terms for the three relatives mentioned in each of the following three groups:—

1. (a) Father's sister.
(b) Mother's brother's wife
(c) Wife's mother or husband's mother.
2. (a) Father's sister's husband
(b) Mother's brother.
(c) Wife's father or husband's father.
3. (a) Father's sister's son.
(b) Mother's brother's son
(c) Wife's brother or husband's brother.

But the data at our disposal do not show any such triangular correspondence for we have independent terms for the mother-in-law, father-in-law and brother-in-law (brother of the husband or wife) whereas common terms are available for the first two relatives of each of the three groups mentioned above. Thus it seems probable that cross-cousin

marriage, which we meet with among the Bhumjās of present day, was introduced long after their terminology of relationship had crystallised on the basis of marriage by exchange. The fact that marriage by exchange was not an irregular institution is sufficiently borne out by the rules of discrimination definitely laid down for the guidance of such unions. The law of *lateral seniority* in marriage by exchange was observed by the Bhumjās like the Hos, their neighbours. Thus when two families united a set of brothers and sisters in marriage the eldest of the bridegroom-brothers of one family had to espouse the hand of the eldest of the bride-sisters of the other family and the unions proceeded in this way till the youngest on both sides were reached. This is shown from the use of such terms as (1) *kaka*, (2) *kaki*, (3) *gungu-aba*, (4) *gungu-ma* (5) *dāi*, (6) *mau*, etc. But in spite of all these evidences the interpretation seems to be highly artificial and requires more definite grounds.

Junior levirate is a fairly established custom of the Bhumjās even to this day and its influence on their terms of relationship establishes beyond doubt the antiquity of the custom. There is only one term, *kaka*, for the father's younger brother as well as the step-father, indicating that the younger brother of the father is the potential second husband of the mother after the death of the father. Similarly one's own wife and the elder brother's wife have the same appellation which also indicates that the elder brother's wife is the potential second wife after the death of her first husband.

Some of the Bhumjā terms of relationship are interesting from other standpoints. Thus *kama* is a term generally used to indicate the son's wife or nephew's wife but this is also applied to the younger brother's or cousin's wife. Though jocular relationship obtains between a person and his elder brother's wife, no such freedom is even thought of between

a man and his younger brother's wife—the strictest rules of avoidance are observed by them. This is reflected in their mutual relationship terms where they are placed as if in two successive generations.

Gunqu is another interesting term which is reciprocal to a certain extent. The term subsists between a person and his father's elder brother in the first instance and also other persons who stand in the same relation in the classificatory sense. As a term of relationship it is completely free from indications of sex and grade but as a term of address sexual affixes are often added but only in cases of persons of the higher grade, e.g., *gunqu ābā* or *gunqu māi*.

Māi is also another reciprocal term used by mothers and daughters probably more on account of its endearing connotation.

Dādā and *dāī* engross our attention more than any other term. Firstly, these are terms for the elder brother and elder sister respectively but by a secondary stretching they are used to indicate the great grand father and the great-grand-mother as also the great grandson and the great-grand-daughter respectively. Thus persons apart from each other by two intervening generations are found to have reciprocal terms. The use of the term *dāīā* for the daughter's son and daughter's daughter's husband and son's daughter's husband seems to have been due to some misconception of the informant from Ghumāodi as we find the more usual term *nāī* from the other sources. It is possible that instead of giving the term of relationship he gave the term of address.

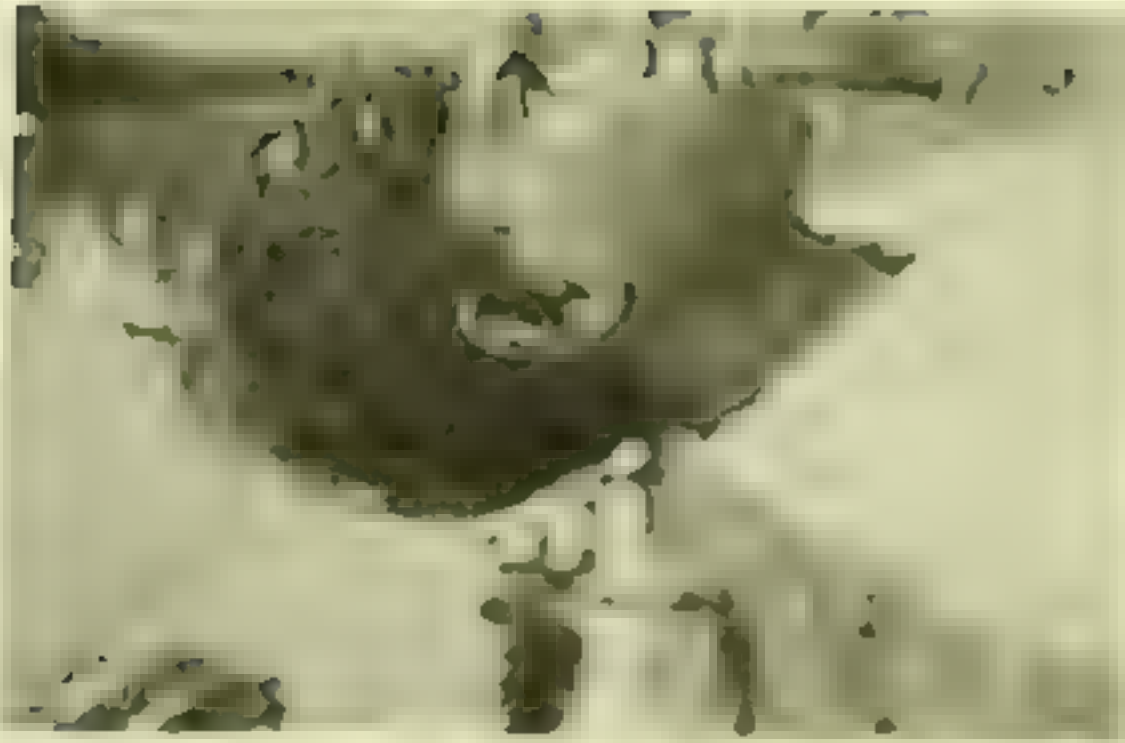
CHAPTER IV

RELIGION

Bhumi religion is still essentially a tribal religion. Their adoption of Hindu cultural ideas have not modified its main principles. It is only in the adoption of some minor Hindu godlings such as Manasā, Tulasi and others, that we perceive the influence of Hinduism in this sphere of their life. Hindu culture has not changed or perceptibly modified their mode of worship nor has it affected their conception of the nature and character of the *devās*. The Brahmin priest whom they have grafted on their social order has no function in their religious pursuits. He does not officiate as priest in any of the *pūjās* even when they worship the Hindu gods and goddesses admitted into their pantheon. He is only required at the time of marriage and funeral ceremonies which are more or less social rites. All the sacrifices that the Bhumijs make to a host of both malevolent and benevolent deities are solely conducted by the *naya*, the communal priest, who is a member of their own tribe.

Most of the deities are associated either with agricultural activities or with diseases, especially those that break out in epidemic form. So they are required to be appeased or satisfied both annually and occasionally. The disease-spirits are generally worshipped during the seasons of their outbreak while the agricultural deities receive their share of offerings at the beginning or end of those particular operations over which they preside.

Bhumi religious performances are mostly communal in nature. Individual worship only occurs in case of deities



for

for

Geological Survey of India, Calcutta. Measurements—Skull—1.27 H—1.25 B—1.25 L—1.25

Head height—1.25 Nose length—1.25

adopted from the Hindu pantheon. All the Bhumij householders of the village jointly worship the *lingas* and all contribute their mite towards the performances. The collection of subscription and the management of the whole affair together with the actual performance of the ritual rest with the *naqi*. In some cases the laity of the village are required to remain fasting for a particular period. Though the *naqi* is the active agent in the worship of the deities the villagers themselves cannot remain at home or follow their daily pursuits undisturbed but are required to participate in the performance as passive observers by being present at the ceremonies.

As we have already stated, the actual performance of every worship is made only by the *naqi*. No lay Bhumij householder may himself offer any sacrifice to his gods. This is interesting from a comparative point of view. Among the Hos, Mundas, Oraons, Kharias and other tribes of the tract, some of the deities are worshipped at home by individual families in which the housefather officiates as priest. The Bhumij custom may be due to the influence of Hinduism which, now a-days, has made clerical office the monopoly of a particular caste and set of individuals. Other indications of Hindu influence are the use of *bet* (legle *Marmelos*) leaves in the worship of all their deities. The *pūrṇa kumbha* or *ghat*¹ has also made its appearance in the religious performances of the Bhumijas.

The archaic form of tribal worship is only visible in the worship of Goram who is certainly one of the most ancient deities of these tribes. Individuals are allowed to communicate their respective desires to the deity in question in their own language. But here also later ideas have made their influence felt. The worshippers themselves cannot communicate their heart's desire directly to Goram but have to pass it

¹ An earthen pot filled to the brim with water and with seven small bricks on its outer surface and a mango twig with leaves dipped and placed on the top.



through an intermediary—the *naga*—who places their individual desires couched in their own language before the deity.

In addition to a number of gods specially worshipped by the Bhumiyas separately, there are a few others, such as Jibir Bari, in whose worship all the inhabitants of a village jointly participate without any distinction of caste or tribe.

Nāgā.

We have already seen that the Bhumiyas employ Brahmin priests for the performance of the social ceremonies but in religious rites they have not yet acknowledged their supremacy. The tribal gods are invariably worshipped by the tribal priest known as *naga* who is a member of their own tribe. Almost every important Bhumij village has its own *naga* who is a communal servant. The position of the *naga* has undergone an appreciable change owing to the breakdown of the Bhumij social and communal order. Separate villages inhabited by the Bhumiyas alone are no longer met with nor does the village land belong to the village community as a whole. Hindu families now often form the most influential section of the village and the village land is owned by some particular individual mostly belonging to the Hindu community. In the eyes of these Hindu inhabitants the *naga* has the same position as the other individuals of his tribe. The landlord, on the other hand, regards him only as a servant as he enjoys rent-free land from him. Thus the *naga* no longer holds that exalted position which religious ministrations always invests a person with. As he is a communal servant of the village, all its inhabitants have equal claims on his services. Thus while the Bhumij householders employ him for religious ministrations the Hindus ask him to run errands for them as for example, when a Brahmin priest is necessary the *naga* is despatched for him. In case of disease in a family it is the duty of the *nagā* to procure medicine from the *Ojha*.

For his services the *nāyā* receives a few plots of rent-free land, known as *chakrādi* from the *maupadar* (landlord). He is entitled to enjoy the proceeds of this land as long as he remains in the office. On the death of the *nāyā* this land goes to the new *nāyā* whether he belongs to the same *nāyā* family or not. In addition to this land he is further entitled to the heads of sacrificed animals in the communal religious rites.

Fish is tabooed to the *nāyā* on the day previous to the performance of any worship. Cock & flesh is also prohibited on these days. On the day of any worship the *nāyā* has to remain fasting until the performance is completed.

The office of *nāyā* is hereditary in the family. The son succeeds the father. In the absence of any son it goes either to the grandson or brother, or uncle or to any other living male member of the family. When none is available in the family the *maupadar* (landlord) selects a man and appoints him with the consent of the villagers. In such a case it is not necessary that the *nāyā* should always be selected from among the inhabitants of the village in question. A man from another village may serve as well. It is also not necessary for the *nāyā* to serve his own village alone, he may accept the post of any other village in addition to that of his own. As already stated, the selection of the *nāyā* rests with the *maupadar* but the consent of the villagers and their ratification must be obtained before the final appointment. But when a member of the *nāyā*'s family succeeds to the office the villagers' consent is not necessary. He automatically occupies the place by virtue of his right.

With these preliminary remarks on the general character of Bhumi religion, we shall now try to describe some of their deities and the method of worshipping them.

Pām, a female deity, is annually worshipped once in the month of *Jyaisitha* (May-June) and again in *Āsadh* (June-July) on any two days fixed by the villagers according to their convenience. It is performed

for timely rains and general welfare of the village. All the inhabitants of the village, without any distinction of caste or tribe, participate in it. The worship takes place on the two days mentioned above, on two spots specially associated with the deity and situated on the two sides of the village—north and south. If the Jyāsthā rite takes place on the northern side, the Āśādh one will be performed on the southern extremity and *vice versa*. The villagers, one and all, whether Hindus or non-Hindus, may not begin to reap their Āśa paddy (early crop) before the performance of the Āśādh rite.

Flowers and *bel* (*Agla Marmelos*) leaves together with *ladu* sweetmeats, purchased from the local markets, form the greater portion of the offerings. A red cock and a he-goat are also sacrificed by the *nāyā* by severing their heads. The flesh of these animals, which may not be taken home, is cooked on the spot and eaten by all the Bhumijas present, while the heads of the sacrificed animals form the perquisite of the *nāyā* which he may take home.

At every worship a clay image of a horse and another of an elephant, in miniature form, are communally purchased from the potters and placed on the spot of worship and form interesting offerings.¹

Along with this annual communal rite, individual families may offer sacrifices in fulfilment of vows taken during the preceding year. In such cases extra offerings of flowers, *bel* (*Agla Marmelos*) leaves, sweetmeats, red cock, he-goat and miniature images of horse and elephant are provided by the family concerned. After the worship, in such cases, the articles offered may be taken home by the family.

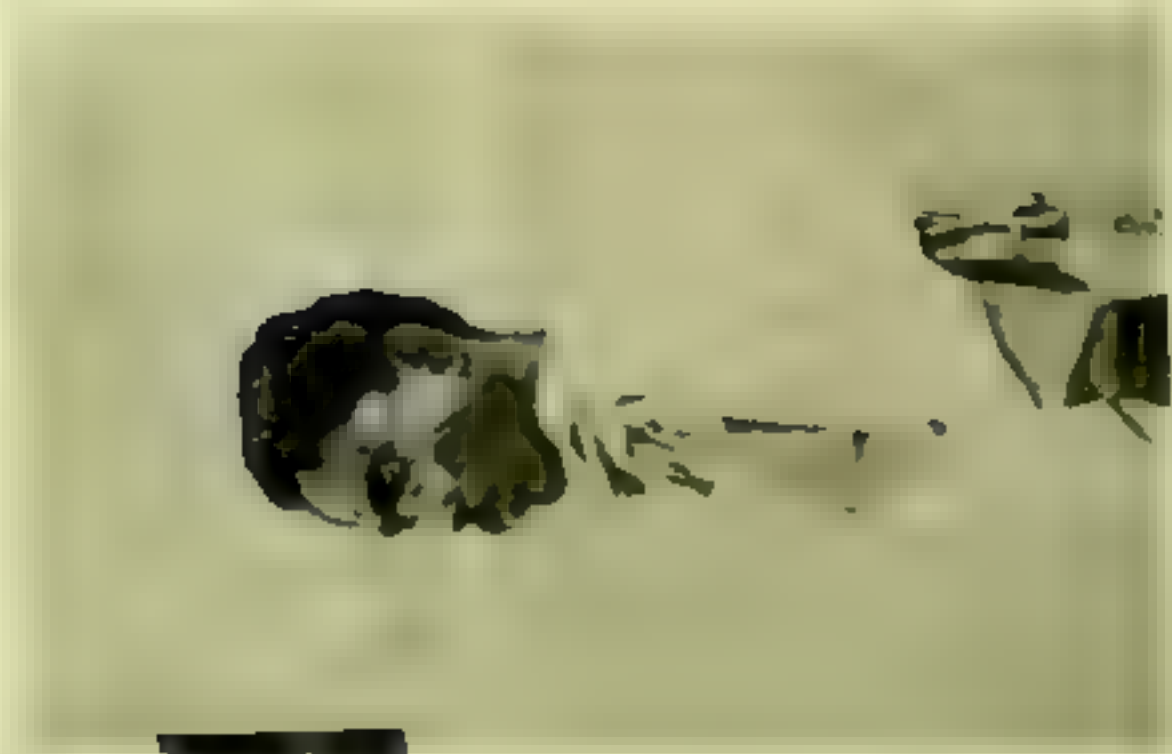
This is a description of the worship of Paoni as held in ordinary villages. But there are, in addition to these, two important centres where the rite takes place with much more éclat. At Paorimel, near the town of Seraikella, the goddess

¹ See Plate V

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1.



WILLIAM L. BROWN, JR., Secretary
of the Board of Directors,
New York City.

Pāri is worshipped before some huge pieces of schist, which have made their appearance through erosion of the surrounding earth, under a number of big trees of the *sal* family. Here, once a year, on a particular day all the lease holders of the State, whether Hindus or not, assemble with sacrificial animals and rice which they offer to the goddess and partake of at the place. At Āhārbandh, in Kerakulla, there is a big circular stone, known as Pāri, where once a year, the tenants and lease-holders assemble and sacrifice animals which are eaten on the spot.

Goram Devā or the tutelary deity of the village, is worshipped in a fixed place in the month of Śrāvan (July-August) in each village. This is also a communal worship in which the *nāyā* officiates. There is no particular date set apart for this rite and the villagers fix a day according to their convenience.

Goram Devā.

There is no image of Goram but he is represented by a piece of stone set up on the spot where the worship takes place.

On the day of worship the *nāyā* pours milk over this stone. Flowers, *bul* (*Acq. Martiana*) leaves and sweetmeats are offered. A cock and a he-goat are sacrificed—the *nāyā* severs the heads and is entitled to them.

The most interesting feature of this rite is that it is done without any *mantra* or incantation. On the other hand each person of the village communicates his prayer for particular objects through his representative—the *nāyā*. None but the *nāyā* can communicate such prayers though they are couched in the ordinary dialect of the place. These prayers do not possess the character of the *mantras* and their meaning or import is never vague.

Manasā, the deity presiding over the snakes, is worshipped in the month of Śrāvan (July-August) on two or three days, in the courtyard of each family. A small earthen pot with raised brim is placed in the courtyard already plastered with cowdung solution. The

Manasā.



ghat¹ (pot), as it is called, is filled up with water and a mango twig with three, five or seven leaves, is placed on it; upon this is put a piece of white cloth without any border, about two cubits long. The whole thing is then placed on some paddy grains.

Flowers, *bel* leaves and sweetmeats are offered as in all other rites. Milk and *gañā* (the tops of hemp) form special offerings to this deity. In addition to these, one each of the following animals and birds, namely, goats and ducks, pigeons and cocks, are sacrificed. The sacrificial animal must always belong to the male sex, and each of them is beheaded by the priest with one stroke of the *tanji* (battle axe). The animal and birds together with the other offerings, are consumed by the devotees after the completion of the rite.

The worship of *karam* tree is performed by such families only as have a *karam* (*Vauclia parvifolia*) tree in the compound. It is performed on any day—preferably on the *ekādasi* day (eleventh day of a lunar fortnight) of the month of Bhādra (August-September). The *nāyā* officiates and worships with *mantras*. As usual, flowers, *bel* leaves and sweetmeats are offered and a ram and a he-goat are beheaded by the *nāyā* who is entitled to their heads. On the day of worship both the males and females of the family remain fasting for the whole day and the following night. They take their meals on the following day only. Non-performance of this worship is believed to be followed by serious diseases in the family and other mishaps.

The worship is accompanied by dancing and singing of the women of the community while the males play on the *dholki* and *mādal*.

¹ Cf. the *pāra* *kuṁbhā* of the Hindus.

It may be noted here that the Karam festival is an important and notable event of the Hindus of Behar.

Dharam, the sun-god, is worshipped in the month of Kartik (October-November) for general welfare and especially for the good of children.

Dharam

There being no special date assigned to the worship, any day convenient to the villagers, is considered suitable. It is a communal worship performed by all the inhabitants of the village jointly. But as in other communal rites Dharam has no fixed public place for his *pūjā*. On the other hand, the performance takes place in the house of one of the villagers as decided beforehand. Here all the inhabitants of the village, both male and female, assemble fasting and join the performance. The fasting continues for the whole day and night. If any one neglects to do this his family, specially the children, suffer from diseases and other misfortunes. The *nāyā* begins the worship from the moment of sun rise with recitation of *mantras* and continues for two or three hours. While performing the rite he has to face the east.

Offerings to Dharam consist of sweetmeats from the Bazar, flowers, *bet* leaves, one white he-goat and one white cock. Each of the animals is beheaded by the *nāyā* with one stroke of the *ḍāṅgī* (battle-axe). The flesh of the sacrificed animals is equally distributed among the different families, and the *nāyā*, in addition to his usual share, receives the heads of the animals as his perquisite. He is not paid anything more either in cash or kind.

Like their Hindu neighbours each Bhumij household has a sacred *tulsi* (*Ocimum sanctum*) plant, kept on a raised earthen platform within the compound. This platform is daily plastered with cowdung solution and kept neat and clean. During the month of Kartik (October-November), each night, an earthen lamp is kept alit on the platform near the plant. It burns for the

Tulsi

whole night and is fed either with *gher* (clarified butter) or mustard oil.

The Magh pōja or Murgi-udī¹ takes place in the month of Magh (January-February) when the *nāyā* of the village secures a cock from any house of the village without any opposition. The bird is taken to the place of worship, usually outside the village, and worshipped with flowers and *bel* leaves but without reciting any *mantra*. It is then allowed to go but is invariably caught by the *nāyā* and killed and cooked on the spot. The villagers have no claim to any share of the flesh which is partaken by the *nāyā* and his family but if any villager happen to be present on the spot he may be given a bit.

Jahar Budi is associated with the *sal* trees and is worshipped on any day of the month of Caitra (March-April) at day time. She is invoked for the better shooting out of the *sal* leaves and also for the better flowering of those trees. It may be noted that the *sal* leaves form an important economic product of the area, on which the Bhumi; householders depend a good deal. When the *sal* trees blossom they keep some of the flowers in the dwelling but as it is believed to bring general welfare to the family, Jahar Budi is worshipped by the whole village conjointly without any distinction of caste or tribe, on a particular spot, pointed out by the goddess herself in a dream to the *nāyā*, when she appears in the form of an old woman. Her seat is usually on a tree which may be of any kind such as *kendu*, *pohri*, *sal*, etc. At Pāndra, about a mile to the north-west of Seraikeia town, the seat of Jahar Budi was found on a *kendu* and a *p-hri* tree peculiarly intertwined.²

Flowers, *bel* leaves and sweetmeats are offered and a ram is sacrificed. The *nāyā*, who officiates as priest, covers the

¹ See Plate I.

² See Plate IV.



PLATE XL.



FIG. 1. Seated female figure, front view.

head of the animal with one stroke from the *tsaqi* (battle axe) and is entitled to the head. He also pours milk at the root of the tree.

The sacrificed animal is cooked on the spot and partaken of by the whole village there, together with the other articles offered.

Small-pox is attributed to the evil workings of *Šatala* who is not worshipped by the *Bhumijis* for her wickedness. On the other hand, *Atra* the goddess who brings relief to people suffering from small-pox, is greatly revered. When this disease breaks out a black hen and a black she-goat are let loose by the old men of the village on a night of the dark half of the month with the following words: *Atra ulam hquā* (come not again). It is not regarded as inauspicious if any of these two return to the village.

CHAPTER V

THE PEOPLE AND ITS HABITAT

The Bhumijas, who form an important branch of the Mundari speaking race, are residents of Chota Nagpur, Orissa, and Western Bengal. A large number of them are also to be met with in Assam where they have recently migrated as labourers. The tribe according to the Census of 1921, numbers 367,344, of whom Bengal has 79,106 or 21.55 per cent., Chota Nagpur and Orissa 240,229 or 65.39 per cent. and Assam 46,354 or 12.61 per cent. Coming to closer details we find the greatest concentration of the Bhumijas in the district of Manbhum where they number 92,194 or 25.09 per cent. of the whole tribe and occur at the rate of 22.2 per square mile. The number here is greater than that of the aggregate of all the districts of Bengal or of Assam, taken together. Next in rank comes the adjacent district of Singhbhum (including the States of Seraikella and Kharswan) where they are 62,693 strong and form 17.6 per cent. of the tribe and are distributed at the rate of 13.9 per square mile. The neighbouring district of Midnapur also claims a large number having 39,636 persons or 10.78 per cent. of the tribe and the density here is 7.8 per square mile. Bankura has a Bhumij population of 16,270 or 4.42 per cent. with a density of 6.1 per square mile. The two other districts, where they occur in a fairly good number, are the 24-Parganas, and Hooghly. They have 11,015 and 4,708 persons or 2.90 and 1.30 per cent. and the density is 2.2 and 4.0 per square mile, respectively. The other districts of Bengal where the Bhumijas are found contain less than a thousand persons each and appear to be comparatively recently settled. Even the



settlements in the districts of the 24-Pargannas and Hooghly do not appear to be old.

In Assam where they are very recent immigrants the greatest concentration occurs in the Assam Valley Division where they number 37,273 or 77·8 per cent. of the immigrants. The Surma Valley Division comes next with 9,533 or 19·9 per cent. of the immigrants. In the other two divisions, viz., Sadiya Frontier and Balapara Frontier their number is negligible.

Now let us examine the distribution of the tribe in relation to the general population of the different localities concerned. The small States of Serakhella and Kharwan head the list in this respect. There we find the Bhamujas forming 7·45 per cent. of the whole population. Next in rank comes the districts of Singhbhum and Manbhum where they are 6·76 and 5·95 per cent. of the general population. Besides these, two other districts namely Bankura and Midnapur possess a Bhumij population rising above one per cent. of the general population. The Orissa States, taken together, also gives us a Bhumij population of more than one per cent. of the general population—all other districts having less than one per cent.

Thus, from the study of their present distribution one fact is unquestionably established that the strongest seat of the tribe is in the districts of Manbhum and Singhbhum. To the west of these two districts they are not found in any number. Neither are they available towards the north. The trend of their migration seems to have been towards the south and the east—Orissa States, Midnapur and Bankura having been their immediate objectives. This tendency may still be traced in the recent movements of the tribe. They are still spreading towards the east mainly and also towards the south.

Almost all the anthropologists, including Colonel Dalton and Sir Herbert Risley, who have come in contact with the people are of opinion that they form a branch of the great Munda family from which they have separated only at a comparatively recent date. Dr. Grierson also arrives at

the same conclusion from the linguistic evidences. The date of separation from the main branch of the Mundas settled on the Ranchi plateau, may conveniently be placed after their settlement in the districts of Manbhum and Singhbhum. The whole culture of the Bhumijas seems to be the product of this region and is intimately connected with this tract. This is clearly borne out by their traditions and manners and customs, especially the funeral customs. The nature of their social organisation also points to a long connection with the district of Manbhum. Thus the following conclusion is forced upon us that the Mundas settled in the district of Manbhum originated a culture which to a certain extent differed from that of the Ranchi plateau and on this basis separated themselves from their congeners to the west. In course of their expansion they first occupied the adjacent district of Singhbhum (which they might have occupied even before their separation from the Mundas of Ranchi) from which they spread towards the south and the east.*

Looking to the distribution of the speakers of Bhumij dialect in the different localities one fact strikes us most, namely all those who claim affiliation to the caste do not invariably speak the special dialect associated with the tribe. Out of the Bhumij population of 367,844, only 137,309 persons or 37 ½ per cent use the dialect as their

* The Bhumij or Bhumij Kols are generally considered to be the characteristic and autochthonous race of the Manbhum district. As a matter of fact they are strictly speaking confined to the part of the district lying west and south of the Kosi river (between Chaudhury and Barabhum), amounting each for some 15,000 and Manbhum and Bagmundi for 15,000 each out of the total of 1,00,000. (Census of India 1901)

"On the Ajodhya hills of the Bagmundi range to the Bagma, north of the Bagmundi Police station and within its jurisdiction—for instance Bhumij and Munda live side by side—the burial places of the former are at Ajodhya on the hill itself while those of the Mundas are at Tenturi, a village in the plains below, and the Mundas admit that the Bhumij were the earlier settlers."

The Bhumij of the western tract, i.e. of the Parganas Maiba and Bagmundi have retained the tribal religion and customs as well as the language to a very much greater extent than the Bhumij of the eastern and northern tracts.

Compland District Gazetteer—Manbhum District, pp. 70-2



1. $\text{Sub}_1 \vdash \text{in.}$ If $\text{in.} \vdash \text{ex.} \vdash \text{b.} \vdash \text{a.}$ then $\text{in.} \vdash \text{ex.} \vdash \text{b.} \vdash \text{a.}$
 2. $\text{Sub}_1 \vdash \text{in.}$ If $\text{in.} \vdash \text{ex.} \vdash \text{b.} \vdash \text{a.}$ then $\text{in.} \vdash \text{ex.} \vdash \text{b.} \vdash \text{a.}$

mother tongue. Of this 37·4 per cent, the Orissa States contain 20 per cent and it is here that people belonging to other castes or tribes have adopted the dialect as their own. Because, here, for every 100 persons of the Bhumij tribe 108·3 persons speak the Bhumij dialect. Coming to smaller areas, we find that of the Bhumij residents of each of the localities mentioned herein, 56·4 per cent speak the Bhumij dialect in Singhbhum, 32·2 per cent in Seraikella and Kharswan and 4·2 per cent in Manbhum. Thus, we find that the position of Seraikella, in matters of Bhumij speech, is intermediate between Singhbhum and Manbhum. The low percentage of Bhumij speakers in Manbhum may be due to greater contact with Hinduism.¹

¹ As the number of persons converted to Christianity is comparatively small, the consideration of the religious factors of the Bhumij is postponed for the present.

Appendix No. I

TABLE I.

Distribution of the Bhumi Population

Name or Name of	General population of the area	Number of Bumjas in the area	Percentage of the Bhumi in the area	Percentage of the Bhumi in the locality in the total population of the locality	Ratio of Bumjas to the total population of the locality	Area in square miles
Budge Bheri	95,534,500	219,430	0.23	20.27	104,000	
Bhaga	67,300,400	79,105	0.12	22.5	62,37	
Bihar and Orissa	57,561,000	800,300	0.00	65.30	111,000	
Assam	1,500,340	47,919	0.00	1.14	61,47	
Madhya Pradesh	1,546,777	72,156	0.00	2.10	4,107	
Singbhum district	700,400	51,205	0.00	13.54	1,679	
Sarabha and Khammam States	100,107	11,000	0.01	3.90	0.02	
Madagascar	2,000,000	20,000	0.00	1.74	1.05	
Bahamas	1,010,941	16,270	0.00	4.42	2,625	
St. Petersburg	2,000,000	11,010	0.00	2.50	4.00	
Hongkong	1,000,000	4,700	0.00	1.30	1,100	
Orissa States	3,007,173	67,739	0.00	17.45	20,000	
Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and Assam	100,000,000	307,344	0.00	1.1	26,507	

Data taken from the census of 1901.

TABLE II.

Distribution of the Bhumi language

Name of the locality	Number of persons of the Bhumi race living in the locality	Number of persons speaking Bhumi language in the locality	Speakers of Bhumi language per 1,000 persons of the Bhumi race	Speakers of Bhumi language per 1,000 persons of the total population	Percentage of persons of the Bhumi race in the locality
Bengal, Bihar and Assam	247,344	137,709	55.7	13.7	22.9
Bengal	75,172	44,811	59.6	14.1	18.7
Bihar and Orissa	36,724	130,771	355.7	16.4	16.9
Assam	16,114	11,577	71.8	17.5	21.5
Orissa	67,723	33,664	49.7	17.7	18.6
Madhya Pradesh	9,941	3,000	30.2	8.5	12.1
Uttar Pradesh	71,135	25,187	35.4	12.7	17.5
Central and Eastern States	11,354	3,763	33.2	12.7	22.3
Mysore district	68,426	(not ascertainable)			
Delaware	10,779				
24 Provinces	11,013				
Bengal	2,794				

* Data taken from the Census of India, 1921

TABLE III.
Shami Education.

Region	Locality	Total		Literate		Literate in English	
		Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Hindu	113	113	113	20	21	14	1
Hindu	101	101	101	17	17	11	1

Percentage of literate of the Hindu population is 17.7% and of the female population is 1.8%.

Percentage of literate in English of the Hindu population is 11.7% and of the female population is 1.0%.

† Taken from the Census of India, 1911.



Appendix No. II
Bhumij Terms of Relationship

TABLE I
Relations through the Father.

	W. in same language as Bhumij V. Language	W. in same language as Bhumij V. Language	W. in same language as Bhumij V. Language (Calcutta)
1. Self			
2. Step-brother			
(a) born of the father & his wife			
(b) born of the father & another wife	(a) step-brother (b) step-brother	Moring dala	
3. Father's elder brother & son			
4. Father's younger brother & son			
5. Father's elder brother's daughter			
6. Father's younger brother's daughter & husband			
7. Father's younger brother's son			
8. Father's younger brother's daughter			
9. Father's elder sister & son			
10. Father's elder sister's daughter			
11. Father's younger sister & son			
12. Father's younger sister's daughter			
13. Father	Pa	Pa	Pa, Pa
14. Step-father	Kaka		
15. Step-mother	Hatigat		
16. Father's elder brother	Kaka or Kaka son Kaka	Kaka	Qaka, Kaka
17. Father's younger brother	Kaka	Kaka	Kaka
18. Father's elder brother's wife	Kaka or Kaka son Kaka	Kaka	Qaka, Kaka
19. Father's younger brother's wife	Kaka	Kaka	Kaka
20. Father's elder sister	Hatigat	Hatigat	Hatigat
21. Father's elder sister's hus- band	Mama	Mama	Mama

N.B. - For typographical difference translation of some has been shown by a brace ({}).

TABLE I—*contd*

		Witness Group and others, Village—Khatan.	Witness Group and others, Village—Ghutusal.	Witness Group and others, Village—Ghumand.
21	Father & younger sister	Hatam	Hatam	Hatam
22	Father & younger sister & husband	Mama		Mama
23	Father & father	A.	A.	On t-ka
24	mother	A.	A.	Nam
25	father & brother	A.	A.	
26	Father & father & brother & wife	A.	A.	
27	Father & father & sister	A.	A.	
28	husband & sister & husband	A.	A.	
29	Father & father & brother & wife	K. (elder) & K. (younger)		
	Father & father & brother & daughter &			
31	Father & father & sister & wife		K.	
	Father & father & sister & daughter &		H.	
32	Father & father & father		D.	
33	mother		D.	
34	other & brother			
35	Father & father & father & daughter			
36	Father & brother & son & son		P.	
37	son		K.	
38	daughter		H.	
39	Father & brother & daughter & son & wife		K.	



TABLE II

Relations through the Mother

	Western names and other words commonly used	Words English and others commonly used	Words—English and—Hindi
1	Self		
2	Mother	Mā	Mā.
3	Mother & father united	Gadāyānā	Kāpānā
4	Mother & father united & husband	Gadāyānā	Kāpānā
5	Mother & younger son or	Mān	Kān
6	Mother & younger son & father & husband	Mān	Kān
7	Mother & { (a) son (b) daughter	(a) Gadāyānā (b) Gadāyānā (c) Gadāyānā	(a) Gadāyānā (b) Gadāyānā (c) Gadāyānā
8	Mother & brother	Mān	Mān
9	Mother's brother & wife	Hān	Hān
10	Mother & { (a) son (b) daughter	(a) Gadāyānā (b) Gadāyānā (c) Gadāyānā	(a) Gadāyānā (b) Gadāyānā (c) Gadāyānā
11	Mother & father	Mān	Mān
12	Mother & mother	Mān	Mān

TABLE III.

Relations between the Brother and Sister

	Winneba	Winneba	Winneba	Winneba
	English	English	English	English
	Younger	Older	Younger	Older
1	Son			
2	Elder brother	Dáik		Dáik
	Younger brother	Báik	Máik	Báik
3	Elder brother's			
	(a) son	(a) Futará	(a) Futará	(a) Futará
	(b) daughter	(b) Jhárá	(b) Jhárá	(b) Jhárá
4	Younger brother	Bháik	Bháik	Bháik
5	Younger brother's wife	Háik	Háik	Háik
6	Younger brother's			
	(a) son	(a) Gúgá		
	(b) daughter	(b) Gúgá (?)		
7	Sister	Dáik (elder)	Máik	Dáik (elder)
		(Younger)		Máik (Younger)
8	Sister's husband	Bháik	Bháik	Bháik
9	Sister's			
	(a) son	(a) Bháik		(a) Bháik
	(b) daughter	(b) Bháik		(b) Bháik
10	Elder brother's			
	Younger brother's			
11	Elder sister's			
	(a) son	(a) Náká		
	(b) daughter	(b) Náká		
	Younger sister's			

TABLE IV.

Relatives through the Wife of a Man

	Wife's Relations	Wife's Relations	Wife's Relations
	Chinese	English	English
	Chinese	English	English
1	Self		
2	Wife	Wife	Wife
3	Wife's brother	Brother	Brother
4	Wife's sister	Sister	Sister
5	Wife's brother's wife	Sister-in-law	Sister-in-law
6	Wife's brother's son	Nephew	Nephew
7	Wife's brother's daughter	Niece	Niece
8	Wife's sister's husband	Brother-in-law	Brother-in-law
9	Wife's sister's son	Nephew	Nephew
10	Wife's sister's daughter	Niece	Niece
11	Wife's father	Father	Father
12	Wife's mother	Mother	Mother

TABLE V.

Relations through the Husband of a Woman

		Witness—Remarks the same Village (a) son	Witness—Remarks at others Village (b) daughter	Witness—Remarks and others Village—(b) daughter (c) daughter
1	Self			
2	Husband	Teknonyim		Name taboued, Teknonyim used
3	Husband's other wife	(a) elder (b, younger) H. name		a) Bapa babu b) Bapa babu
4	Step-son	...	Baba, H. name	...
5	Step-daughter	...	Mā	
6	Husband's elder brother	Babu H. name		Ba. H. name
7	Husband's elder brother's wife	Dani	...	Dani
8	Husband's elder brother's	(a) son (b) daughter	(a) Patah (b) Jhār	(a) Bhagat (b) Bhagat
9	Husband's younger brother	(a) son (b) daughter	(a) Patah (b) Jhār	Dani
10	Husband's younger brother's wife	Mā		Mā by relation (b) by address
11	Husband's younger brother's	(a) son (b) daughter	(a) Patah (b) Jhār	(a) Bhagat (b) Jhār
12	Husband's sister	H. name		Dani (elder sister) (younger)
13	Husband's sister's husband	H. name		(a) (elder sister's) H. name (younger sister's)
14	Husband's sister's	(a) son (b) daughter	(a) Bhagat (b) Bhagat	(a) Bhagat (b) Bhagat
15	Husband's father	H. name		Babu
16	Husband's mother	H. name		H. name

TABLE VI.
Relations through the Son

	Witness—Kamaj and others Village—Bhujpur	Witness— Bakram and others Village— Chutepur	Witness—Biring and others Village—Chutepur
1 Self			
2 Son	Hanz Daba	...	Hanzaba
3 Son's wife	Kimbi	Kimbi	Kimbi
4 Son's wife's father	Samdhar	Samdhar	Samdhar
5 Son's wife's mother	Samdhar	Samdhar	Samdhar
6 Son's son	Na term of relationship ?		Da term of address ?
7 Son's son's wife	Natani	...	Jai Kimbi
8 Son's son's { (a) son (b) daughter	(a) Daba Dabi	...	
9 Son's daughter	Natani	...	Natani
10 Son's daughter's husband	Natani		Jai ...
11 Son's daughter's { (a) son (b) daughter	(a) Daba (b) Dabi	...	

TABLE VII.
Relations through the Daughter

	Witness—Kamaj and others Village—Bhujpur	Witness— Bakram and others Village— Chutepur	Witness—Biring and others Village—Chutepur
1 Self
2 Daughter	Hankari
3 Daughter's husband	Jamari	...	Jamari
4 Daughter's husband's father	Samdhar		Samdhar
5 Daughter's husband's mother	Samdhar		Samdhar
6 Daughter's son	Na term of relationship ?		Da term of address ?
7 Daughter's son's wife	Natani		Jai
8 Daughter's daughter	Natani		Jai
9 Daughter's daughter's husband	Da term of address		Da term of address ?

Bhumij Killa

(Comparative Table)—Contd

Serial No.	Name of the village or by name	It is situated in the district of	Meaning of the name	Reference	Remarks	Page No.
9	Sag chura	1. M. 10	1. Cobra	(1) Buley-T.C.B. App P	107	1. Buley
	2. P. 10	2. P. 10	2. P. 10	(2) Buley-T.C.B. App P	117	2. P. 10
	3. P. 10	3. P. 10	3. P. 10	(3) Buley-T.C.B. App P	118	3. P. 10
	4. P. 10	4. P. 10	4. P. 10	(4) Buley-T.C.B. App P	119	4. P. 10
	5. P. 10	5. P. 10	5. P. 10	(5) Buley-T.C.B. App P	120	5. P. 10
	6. P. 10	6. P. 10	6. P. 10	(6) Buley-T.C.B. App P	121	6. P. 10
	7. P. 10	7. P. 10	7. P. 10	(7) Buley-T.C.B. App P	122	7. P. 10
	8. P. 10	8. P. 10	8. P. 10	(8) Buley-T.C.B. App P	123	8. P. 10
10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10
11	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10
12	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10
13	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10
14	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10
15	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10
16	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10	P. 10



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THE
WILD KHARLAS OF DHALBHUM

BY
TARAKCHANDRA DAS, M.A.

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PREFACE

The materials for this short paper on the Wild Kharias of Dhalbhum, a little known tribe inhabiting the forests of Singhbhum and other adjacent tracts, were collected in course of a stay at Ghatsila in connection with the annual excursion of the Anthropology Department of the Calcutta University. Our knowledge of the Wild Kharias so long depended on the very meagre information supplied by Messrs. V. Ball and W. H. P. Driver. I have only attempted here to give a more detailed account of some of the manners and customs of this interesting people. It is incomplete in many respects, being the result of enquiry conducted for a very short period of about ten days only. But the importance of the tribe from anthropological standpoint combined with the dearth of information available form the only justification for its publication.

I have much pleasure in recording my thanks to Mr. Ananda Lal Mukherjee who very kindly placed his bungalow at Ghatsila at our disposal during the period we remained there. I am also indebted to Mr. Radhashyam Ghosh who rendered valuable service to the party in various ways. Last, though not the least, I take this opportunity to express my appreciation of the services of the senior students of Anthropology of 1927 who by their unstinted efforts tried to make a success of our expedition. The names of Messrs. Pravash Chandra Bose, M. Sc., M. B., and Chittaranjan Roy, M. A., deserve special mention in this connection.

ASUTOSH BUILDING,
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T. C. D.

21st September, 1931.

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THE WILD KHARIAS OF DHALBHUM

CHAPTER I

THE PEOPLE AND ITS HABITAT

According to the Census of 1921 the Kharias number 138,745 in the provinces of Bihar and Orissa and Assam. They are also found in the Central Provinces and Bengal but the Census Reports of these provinces do not show them as a separate caste or tribe but enumerate them only as speakers of Kharia language—the majority of whom are expected to be Kharias by caste or tribe as well. The Kharia speakers of the Central Provinces come from Raigarh and Jashpur States which are adjacent to Bilchla, while those from Bengal are found mostly in the district of Jalpaiguri where they have migrated as tea-garden labourers.

In Assam, the Kharias number 14,257 of whom 10,664 are described as Hindus and 3,593 as animists. They are mostly to be found in the Assam Valley Division where the districts of Lakhimpur, Darrang and Sibsagar claim the greatest number. These Kharias of Assam have been wholesale imported from their original home in Chota Nagpur and Orissa as labourers in the tea-gardens where some of them have already settled down.

Chota Nagpur and the Orissa States seem to be the centre of greatest density of the tribe as there we find 90,437 of them returned as Hindus and animists and 31,101 as Christians.

Of the different districts of Chota Nagpur, Ranch alone contains 38,864 of the Hindus and animists and 2,000 of the Christians or 51.7 per cent. of the ones settled in Bihar and Orissa. Dalton, in his *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, writes that the Kharias are found en masse in the south-west of Lehardugga in Ranch. Risley also found them in the same place. The other districts where they are met with are, in order, — Sambalpur 7,212, Singhbhum 5,040, and Manbhum 3,000. The Orissa States contain 13,046 but considering the wide area of the tract the density is not considerable.

In describing the Kharias, Risley¹ refers to them as "a Wild and settled people who are respectably dressed, comfortably housed and well supplied with wholesome food. Some of them hold limited tenures of appreciable value, and there are signs of a tendency among them towards the adoption of Hinduism." Of course what Risley observed as a tendency only in 1891 has now become a definite fact and out of 90,447 Kharias of Bihar and Orissa 11,024 or 10 per cent. proved to be Hindus in the last census (1921). Christianity has also claimed its quota and we find in the same tract now 34,101 Kharia Christians where Risley does not mention even one. But we are not concerned with these settled and somewhat civilized members of the tribe. As early as 1803-1807 Mr A. Ball² spoke of another section of the tribe who showed marked characteristics to differentiate them from the settled Kharias, already described. These Wild Kharias, as he called them, "inhabit the crests of the highest ranges in Manbhum, Singhbhum, and the Tributary States of Chota Nagpur and Orissa and are shunned even by the Hos and Bhums on account of their reputation as wizards. These wandering savages, like the Birkors of Hazaribagh and Palamou, who, Colonel Dalton supposes, may belong to the same tribe, are now believed to be

¹ Risley, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Vol. I, 1890, p. 470.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 470.



PLATE I



The Wad Kharin village at Bampda, at the foot of the Chary hills
showing three islands out of four, each occupied by a family

rapidly dying out. It is with these people that we came in contact during a tour through the hills of Singbhum near Dhalbhumgarh and Ghatsila.

We visited about ten or twelve settlements of the Wild
 Kharas both towards the north and south of
 the town of Ghatsila mostly situated at the

foot of the hills. Some of the settlements, especially those nearer the town, formed parts of larger villages inhabited by other tribes. Others were isolated settlements of the Kharas only. Most of the villages visited were situated at the fringe of the great forest blocks which cover the greater part of this tract. For unavoidable reasons we could not enter into the heart of these forest blocks which form the real home of the tribe. But on many occasions we had the opportunity to meet Kharas from the interior of these forests, especially in the weekly markets, where they came to sell their forest products. The tract is mainly covered with large forests of the different varieties of the Sal, interspersed with low, isolated hills similarly covered with Sal trees wherever it is possible for them to grow in the midst of a rocky soil. The wild animals of the forest such as the wild boars, leopards, tigers, etc., are the constant companions of the Kharas in their jungle home. Herds of wild elephants and deer are also found in this area. In 1929 I visited some more Wild Kharas settlements near about Baludia and Rangiposi in the Mayurbhanj State.

The settled Kharas near the southern Koel river have been described by Colonel Dalton as having a
 "physique much on a par with the Mundas, rather coarser perhaps in feature and figure, but where they differ approximating more to the appearance of a north-eastern tribe." Risky² also has spoken of the tribe in the same terms

¹ Dalton, *Ethnology of Bengal* (1871), p. 161.

² *History, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Vol. I, p. 465.

following Dalton. He has also published measurements of 78 Kharias from Lohardagga and has given their indices and averages.¹

Risky's measurements

	Settled Kharias (Averages only)	Mundas (Averages only)	Wild Kharias as observed by us (Averages only)
Cephalic length	18.6	18.7	18.36
Cephalic breadth	12.3	12.5	12.42
Cephalic Index	74.5	74.9	73.60
Nasal length	4.8	4.8	4.10
Nasal breadth	4.0	4.0	3.78
Nasal Index	80.5	80.9	72.11
Stature	160.1	158.1	155.76

Thus from an examination of this table it appears that the Kharias are, according to Risky's measurements, a dolichocephalic, platyrrhine people with a stature below mean. A comparison with the measurements of the Mundas as given by Risky shows the very close similarity between the two tribes both in actual measurements as well as indices. Except stature and nasal index the difference is more or less nominal. Thus what Dalton wrote of the Kharias and the Mundas from observation only seems to be established by the anthropometric measurements of Risky. But the Wild Kharias seem to differ from their settled brethren in some important features, as shown by our measurements of the people. It may be mentioned here that the Wild Kharias have not been measured by any anthropologist before us. Habitually timid in disposition, they fly to the hills and jungles at the approach of civilized man and it may be imagined how they will receive the anthropologist

¹ Risky, *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal: Anthropometric Data*, Vol. I (1881), p. 332.

with his odd-looking instruments. On more than one occasion we found deserted villages, the inhabitants of which have gone to take shelter in the neighbouring hills on our approach. So our attempts at anthropometric measurements were not very successful and we could measure only a few subjects who for some reason or other could not avoid us. Knowing full well, that the number is absolutely inadequate to give any reliable idea of the people we place them before the reader for what they are worth. The tests to show that these Wild Kharias differ from the settled section of Lohardagga in two important features—namely race and stature. They are an extremely platyrrhine people (N. 1, '92-11) with a short stature (153-75 c. in.). The head is also longer but the difference is not much. The averages of other measurements coincide substantially with those of the settled section. But in spite of this nothing can be said with any amount of certainty until we get at least the minimum number of subjects required for reliability.

The skin colour varies from very dark-brown (or almost black) to brown. Hair on the head is black in colour and wavy in nature. But hair on the face is rather scanty and appears late. The nose is broad, flat, and low—and in one case partially concave (Plate X, Badou Khari)—and the depression at the nasion is remarkable and almost universal. The lips are full and seem to be slightly reverted in some cases. The eyes are straight and large but not oblique nor the epicanthic fold present. The cheek bones are slightly protruding. Thus the Wild Kharia presents all the characteristic features of a typical Pre-Dravidian.

The Pre-Dravidian connection, thus established through anthropometric treatment, is further strengthened by evidences from tradition and mythology. Dalton refers to a tradition which avers that the Parnis and the Kharias were the aborigines of Mayurkhanj and that they and the "family of the chief (Bhaup) were all produced

Affinities.

from a peafowl's egg, the Bhuiy from the yolk, the Purania from the yolk, the Karamia from the shell." Mr. Russell,¹ writing of the Kharia of Jharkpur and Bagarh and Jashpur States, speaks of a tradition which connects the Kharias and the Nagvans. Rupas is a derivative of two words—the Kharia turning it from the elder one while the Nagvans Rupas, who are really Mundas from the younger one. A curious traditional relation is said to exist among the Pargias and the Rupas of Bastar. Mr. Russell has tried to explain the traditions in the following manner— "as the Pargias are probably an older branch of the Gonds, who were reduced to subjection by the subsequent Raj-Gond immigrants near the ancestors of the Bastar Rupas, so it seems a reasonable expectation that the Kharias stood in a similar relationship to the Mundas or Bods." Mr. W. H. P. Driver² describes the Kharias of Lohardugga as divided into a number of subtribes of which Kharia-Munda and Kharia-Oron are two. Risley also refers to the Kharia-Munda section of the tribe and derives them from union between Kharia women and Munda men. The Mundas allow their men to marry Kharia women but prohibit the marriage of their daughters with the Kharia men.³ This relation between the two tribes very nearly approaches the relation which naturally subsists between the conqueror and the conquered where the racial difference is not marked enough to cause disgust for such unions. According to Risley's information the settled Kharias of Lohardugga have a tradition to the effect that the Mundas are their elder brothers. This section of the tribe is evidently later immigrants in the tract where they already found the Mundas in occupation and from whom they most probably learnt many of the arts of life. This may explain the difference in the tradition.

¹ *Diction. Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 166. Footnote 2.

² *Races and Rivals. The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces*, Vol. III, p. 446.

³ W. H. P. Driver, *Notes on Some Eurasian Tribes*, J. A. S. B., Vol. LVI Part I, p. 16.

⁴ *Risley. The Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, Vol. I, p. 466.

PLATE II



The hut of Kartik Kharia of Hiteagunge with his daughter and step-mother in front in the foreground. The woman appeared to have had a tendency towards steatopygia. Note the method of constructing that walls and the position of the door.



Kharia¹ appears as the name of a clan of the Barbars and Rm Bahadur S. C. Ray explains it as the name of a tribe and suspects an identity with the Kharias.

Extremely morose in disposition, the Wild Kharias look on life as a burden which they are forced to carry on throughout the long tenure of existence. Life does not seem to have anything good to offer to them nor do they struggle to extract a few moments of happiness from it. Their submission to the trials of life forms the keynote of their character. This extremely sad outlook on life contrasts strongly with the light-hearted and gay mood of their neighbours the Santals, Mundas, Oraons, Kols and others. The whole day they pass in search of food and just after sunset retire for rest. Music and dancing—the outward manifestation of innate joy and happiness—which enlivens the evenings of almost every Munda, Ho or Oraon village and which peering far into the night, speedily brings the lighter half of the month, do not break the monotony of their otherwise evenings. Another prevailing note of their character is timidity. They are not only afraid of supernatural beings but even of civilized man. I have already referred to the fact how the inhabitants of a whole village fled to the jungles on my approach. This is not only my experience but Mr. Bell also met with the same fate. Wars or warlike activities are never heard of them. Crimes like murder or theft are few and far between. Frithfulness is not, after all, a very strong point in their character, as it appeared to us. We are unable to make any statement about their sex-life as our stay among them was too short to form any idea of this side of their life. Add to these their improvident nature and we get almost a complete picture of their character. Personal cleanliness also is not much looked after.

¹ S. C. Ray, *The Barbars* (1928), p. 91

CHAPTER II

DOMESTIC LIFE

Occupations

The Wild Kharas of Dhalbhon are still passing through that stage of culture which is known in anthropology as the "food-gathering stage."

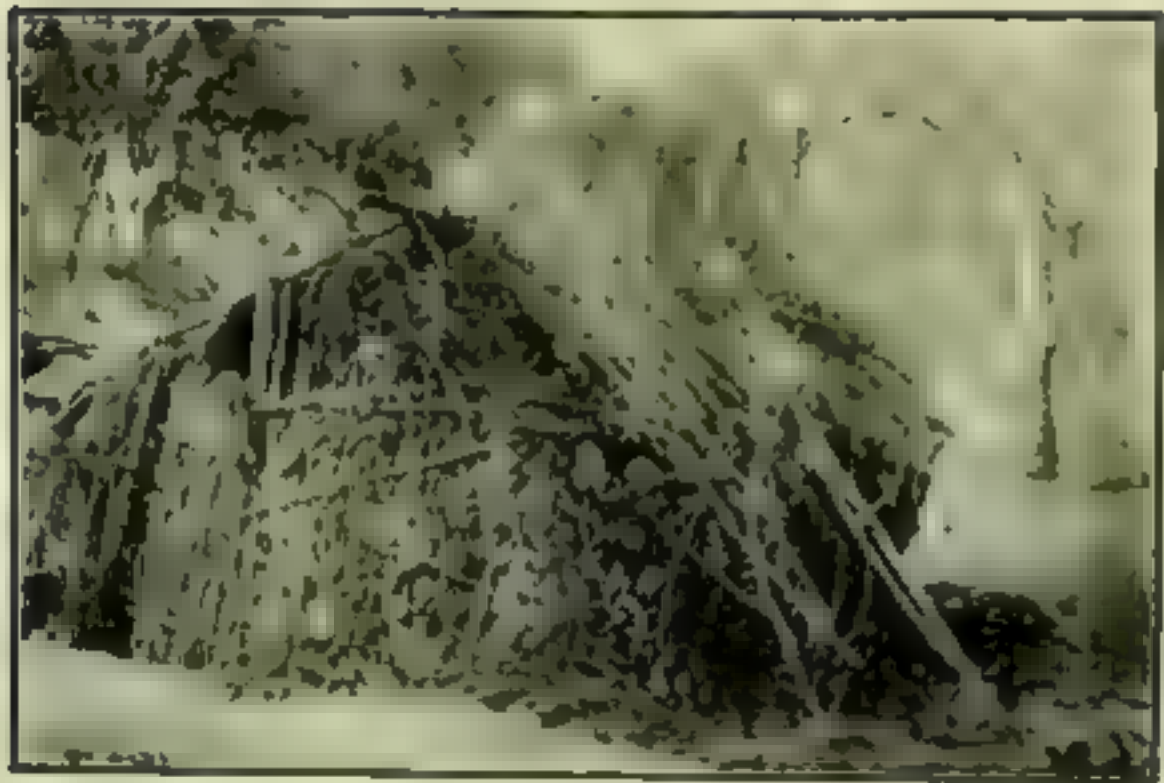
Collection of roots and fruits.

They mainly depend upon the products of the forests in the midst of which they live. The edible tuberous roots of the various plants which grow wild in these jungles, together with the wild fruits, form the principal sources of food supply to this miserable section of humanity. Every Kharas adult, male or female, goes out in the early morning and enters into the neighbouring jungle or ascends the hills nearby, in search of these forest products. Each of them usually carries a digger in the hand with which the tuberous roots are unearthed. Some of these are eaten on the spot, either boiled or roasted, and the rest carried home in the evening. The digger (*khonta*) is made of a shaft of bamboo or wood of about three feet in length into which is fitted an iron blade of elongated shape with a pointed butt which is introduced into the body of the shaft through one of its extremity. The end of the shaft into which the butt is introduced is strengthened with several coils of the bark of a tree. The blade of this digger is about six inches long, three-quarters of an inch broad and about half-an-inch maximum depth. The cutting end gradually thins into a keen edge. This instrument is the constant companion of the Kharas.

In addition to these tuberous roots the Kharas also utilize to the fullest extent the wild fruits which, during particular seasons, grow in abundance in their native forests. As they are



PLATE III



Wild Kharra hut at the foot of the hill near Ramchandrapur. Note the method of constructing but-walls.

expert tree-climbers they do not require any elaborate arrangement for collecting these fruits.

Resin is also collected from the forests and sold in the market.

The Kharas are expert tree-climbers, as already mentioned, and go up to any height. Honey forms one of the most prized delicacies of the tribe. It is more often sold to the people of the plains who pay a good price for the article. The collection of honey from the hives of these jungle bees requires a great amount of skill and is full of risk and danger. These bees, as if to annoy their enemies, habitually construct their hives, on the precipitous side of the hills, under some overhanging rock. Even this does not save them from the hands of the Kharas. The Kharas goes up to the top of the hill through the sloping side and from an advantageous position, lets down a rope or creeper which is his only ladder and secures it at some tree or piece of rock or asks his comrade, if there be any, to hold it fast. The man next hoists himself with oil over which *mantras* (incantations) have been recited and thus protected against the bites of the bees, he slowly goes down the rope or creeper. Smoke is also applied at which the bees depart and the honey and wax collected in a vessel. Next, he is either hoisted up or let down by his friend, as convenient.

We did not meet with any instance of organized hunting among the Kharas as is practised by the Orans, Mondas, and Bhumbas during some of their annual festivals. But almost every Kharas carries a bow and some arrows for killing small games or birds that may happen to fall before him during his wanderings in the forests. Sometimes they also attempt to catch animals with traps and nets. Birds are often ensnared with spikes of bamboo made sticky with gums. Thus the monotony of their menu is relieved, to some extent, through the introduction of animal food.

Fishing forms another important source of food supply to the Kharas. It is commonly practised in

Fishing.

the pools and streams of the forests and hills. They follow different methods for the purpose. One important method is to poison the waters of a pool or stream. The bark of a particular kind of tree locally known as *Ashu* is used for poisoning. It is collected in huge quantity and carried to the bank of the pool or stream. These are pounded between two stones, piece by piece and every now and then dipped in the water. Thus the poisonous property of the bark is transferred to the water. When the water is sufficiently saturated with it the fish, stunned or dead, float over the surface of the water, and are easily collected.

Some of the simpler varieties of fishing baskets, commonly used by the other tribes of the locality, are also employed by the Kharas. Nets also are not unknown to them.

A very primitive method of fishing employed by the Kharas is to bail out waters from some shallow pool when the small prawns lay exposed in the mud. This is usually practised in the summer months when these pools almost dry up.

Agriculture and horticulture in their technical sense are almost unknown to the Wild Kharas of Dib-

Agriculture
in Dibrotum

brutum. In only one village we found a Kharas family in possession of a kitchen garden attached to the house where one or two varieties of vegetables and a few chilly plants were grown. This patch of land was well protected with a fencing of the branches of some brambly trees. The land was evidently prepared by hoeing. As we did not meet with a second garden of this nature or of any other nature, we may attribute it to culture contact. This particular settlement is a part of a big Santal village and as every Santal family possesses a kitchen garden of this type, it is quite possible that this Kharas family has only imitated them. It may be mentioned here that the two or

PLATE IV



Wild Kharis domicile in the plain — Note the four thatched construction
of the main hut

three other Kharia families residing in the same village had no such garden.

One of our Hunda goons in the tract said that the Kharias possess similar gardens on the hill, usually inaccessible to other people. We tried to verify this piece of information and asked the Kharias of different villages but none of them admitted or even incidentally referred to it. Coupled with this we have the negative evidence of the absence of any agricultural or horticultural implement, excepting the sickle, in any of their houses. We systematically searched the different huts of the village Baggata and also had the opportunity to minutely observe the interior of huts in other places but nowhere did we meet with any such implement. Thus, the information given by our goons seems to be less reliable and is most probably of the nature of hearsay, as even they themselves have not seen such gardens with their own eyes. But, this does not preclude the possibility of its existence as the *Jhum* type of cultivation is met with among the Hill Bhuiyans of Keonjhar and also among a section of the Bichors who are certainly not far removed from the Kharias in their cultural attainments. The Kharia families, settled in the plains, within the zone of cultivation, sometimes supply farm servants to the members of other tribes such as the Santals, Bhumiaks, Mundas and others who practise agriculture. We met with a Kharia lad of about twenty, working in the field of a Santal whose servant he happened to be. He had been employed for the whole session and was to receive regular payment at the stipulated times, as usual in the tract.

Food and Drink Their Preparation

We have already referred to the various articles of food used by the Kharias. Rice is the staple food of the people and is purchased in the market. We have already seen that they do



not produce it themselves but depend upon the other castes and tribes for this important article of food. As it cannot be purchased in sufficient quantity through want of money they have to depend more on the products of the forests and the mountains. Rice is boiled in water and the gruel strained off and kept separate. Cooked rice is often eaten with salt alone, or with some form of curry. Rice gruel is also consumed by them. The edible roots are usually scorched in fire or boiled in water before eating. Meat is also cooked in water with simple condiments like chutney, tamarind, etc. Raw meat is preserved by drying and we have seen long strips of the same hanging from a bamboo rod over the oven. We found a snake, with its head intact, drying over the oven. Fish is also preserved in the same manner. Young Sid leaves are also eaten. Pulse forms a delicacy.

Water is the universal drink of the people though on occasions of feasts and festivities *hundi* (rice brew) is brewed. Excepting these two, they have no other drink.

Village Sites

Typical Wild Khari villages are mostly situated at the foot of hills (see Plate D). We did not find any village on the top of a hill nor on the steeping sides. They prefer to live near the hills but not upon them. The selection of a village site depends mainly upon two factors, namely, proximity to some jungle-covered hill and that there must be some natural source of water supply. The hills and jungles supply them with the bare necessities of life whereas the pools and springs are the only sources from which they draw their water. Excavation of tanks or wells are costly affairs, especially in this region, and not to speak of the Kharias even their more well-to-do Hindu neighbours do not undertake such tasks. The pools are formed of natural depressions at the foot of the hills and are filled up with rain water during the monsoon. In the summer months these pools dry up when the

Kharias have to depend upon the scanty supply of hill springs only. Cases are not rare when village had to be shifted on account of the failure of these sources of water supply. But usually the Kharia settlements are permanent villages and it is only on occasions of scarcity of food or water or when epidemic diseases break out that these people leave their old sites in favour of new ones.

In addition to these typical villages at the foot of the hills there are others in the plains, sometimes three or four or even more miles away from the nearest hill. These are not exclusive Kharia villages but villages of other tribes in which the Kharias have settled. In such villages their huts are not indiscriminately scattered among the dwellings of other castes or tribes but occupy a definite quarter of the village. Some settlements of this type are met with near about the town of Ghatsala in the district of Singhbhum. In such places they have already given up their usual mode of livelihood and have taken to wage-earning as day-labourer or farm-servant.

A typical WUI Kharia settlement contains about five or six huts, sometimes the number comes to about nine or ten and sometimes again it decreases to three or four or even one. Thus Bagpala had only four huts with four families. There is no systematic alignment of the huts in these villages, they occur here and there in a scattered fashion. Each hut is occupied by a family of parents and immature children. Sons, after marriage, usually leave their parents and set up separate huts and daughters go over to their husbands after the ceremony. The Kharia villages are not marked by any big tree. Fruit trees are not met with. No attempt is made for defending the village against enemies or ferocious animals nor are they situated on naturally fortified places.

Huts : Their Construction.

The typical WUI Kharia huts are miserable shelters constructed with the materials easily available in the locality,

and requiring minimum skill and labour. The ground plan is always rectangular. The length of the huts vary from 15 ft. to 9 ft. only, where the breadth is usually between 7 ft. and 5 ft. The height from the top of the pith to the ridge pole is about 20 ft. while to the top of the posts about 5 ft. The plinth is seldom raised above the ground level. A shallow drain of about a foot or two in width is cut around the four sides of the hut which carries away the rain-water falling from the roof or flowing from the upper ground level.

Ordinarily a hut is supported upon eight wooden posts of *Saigog*. The posts are driven into the ground to about 1 ft. or 2' deep and are arranged in two parallel rows of four each occupying the lengthwise sides of the rectangle. The posts are generally 3 to 4 in. diameter. On the top of these two rows of posts two horizontal logs of about 2' in diameter are placed, one on each side, and tightly joined to the posts with creepers or ropes of bark fibre. The top of each post is grooved in the form of an L to receive the beam. On the two sides of these beams, upon the two corner posts on each side, are placed two cross beams of the same strength and are similarly attached. The roof is supported on this framework. The trellis-work is constructed of *Saigog* of reputed size and strength, tied with strips of bark or creepers. The huts are usually two-thatched (see Plates I, II and III). We did not meet with a single four-thatched house belonging to any Wild Khari of the interior though the other tribes of the locality as well as the plains Kharis possess such huts (see Plate IV). Neither can we find a Khari hut with a flat roof as the materials they use in constructing do not permit it. The two thatches are joined at the top, at an acute angle, so that rain-water falling upon them may pass off more easily. They are then covered with paddy straw or dried grass in thick layers and firmly pressed on the trellis-work with *Saigog* or strips of bamboo at regular intervals, passing along the whole length of the roof and tied with creepers or bark strips. The walls are made of vertical wooden logs closely planted in the ground and

Plate V



taken on and how wide. See to do at 1/2 inch per 1/2 inch

securely tied to one or more cross-pieces running at intervals of 1' 6" to 2' each (see Plate II). Next they are covered with specially prepared mud. In many cases this is dispensed with and in place of closely planted logs only leafy branches are used (see Plate III). Windows are unknown to the people. Only one door is kept in front of the house towards the left. The door-opening is about 3' 6" x 2' and the single door-panel which covers it is a little bigger. It is made of a framework of wooden logs and bamboo splints covered with mud. One side of this panel is permanently attached to the wall near the opening of the door with binding of reeds or bark ropes which serve the purpose of hinges and allow it to move backward or forward. A piece of wood is kept ready, sometimes lying from the wall, with which the door-panel is securely barred at night from inside.

Sometimes the hut is divided into two compartments with a partition of the same nature and materials as the walls of the house. An opening in the partition is kept for entering the compartment which has no other door. When the hut is thus divided into two compartments one is set apart for sleeping while the other serves the purpose of a kitchen and store room.

Domestic Utensils.

The Kharra domestic utensils are few in number though sufficient to meet their simple needs. For tacking paddy the wooden mortar and pestle are invariably met with in every Kharra household. This primitive instrument has not yet been replaced by the more improved *dheññi*. The mortar is fashioned out of a single piece of wood, cylindrical in shape and about 20" in height and 10" in diameter. The top of this log is scooped out in the shape of a deep bowl of about 10" in depth keeping a rim of about an inch or two, all round at the top. The outer side of the block is also chiselled into concave shape. The size and shape of the article varie greatly. The pestle is a simple piece of rounded wood of about 4' or 5' in length and



2 to 3 in diameter. It is made of some heavy species of wood. The pebble is first soaked and boiled in water and dried in the sun. After this a quantity of the grains is placed in the mortar and worked with the pebble. The task devolves upon women only. In preparing ardu rice the preliminary operations of soaking and boiling in water are dispensed with.

For separating the bran from the grains they use a winnowing fan of bamboo strips woven into proper shape and size. Water is both carried and stored in large earthen waterpots purchased from the potters (Kamthar) in the weekly market (see Plate IV). Straw oil-kins made in the form of ring are used for smiting waterpots as well as cooking pots. An ordinary Khamti family possesses only one such waterpot which costs about two annas. Another important utensil which we meet with in every house is the earthen cooking pot which does not cost more than five or six pice each and is purchased from the Kamthars (potters). This completes the earthenware vessels of the Khamti. Bead is served in plates and cups of Sal leaves which they themselves make in large numbers both for household use as well as for selling in the weekly market where they are purchased by other tribes and castes. Several Sal leaves are sewn together in the form of plates or cups with small bamboo or wooden splinters. Even *bandho* is drunk from these bead cups both at home and in the market. In feasts and festivals the Hindu and the tribal population use these bead-cups and plates. Thus, this industry forms one of the main sources of their income.

Several of small gourds serve the purpose of ladles. For grinding the staple condiments they use in cooking, such as turmeric, pepper, etc. each household has a flat piece of stone and a elongated roundish pebble (see Plate III).

One or more baskets are also found in the house for storing articles of daily use as well as valuables. Basket traps for catching fish are also in evidence. Wooden planks for sitting are also met with.

FIGURE VI



Figure VI. A group of white men standing in front of a building. Note the much lighter skin color of the men.



Three pieces of wood or more usually bamboo splits of about a foot in length and of required strength are joined in the form of a triangle and suspended with ropes from the roof, form a simple device for keeping cooked food or such other articles which may be injured by vermin or domestic animals.

For sleeping on, they have date-palm leaf mats woven in the style of twill in small sections of about 8" to 10" in breadth and 5 or 6' in length. These pieces are next joined by weaving one after another and formed into a mat of about 7' to 8' in length and 5' to 6' in breadth.

Add to these a broom of straw and we come to the end of the list of their domestic utensils. Brass or bell-metal utensils are never met with in the wilder section of the tribe though they are not unknown to the more civilized section.

Domestic Animals.

The Wild Kharia do not burden themselves with many domestic animals. Cattle are not reared by them as they have no field to till and also as milk is not used in food by them. Dogs are kept and serve them in various ways. Fowls are also reared but in small number and are eaten at feasts and festivals. Sheep, we have never seen among them though goats are sometimes found. Cats do not find it worth while to loiter about their premises. The few domestic animals that we have found in Kharia houses are never fed by their owners nor do they think themselves responsible for it. The animals make their own arrangements and thus suits their masters well.

Dress and Ornaments.

The dress of an ordinary Kharia consists of a piece of lion cloth of about four yards in length which he purchases from the shops in the weekly market. It is either imported or locally made by the Takris (weavers) of the place. The piece is usually thick and coarse and lasts for a number

of months. It is worn round the waist—one end passing between the thighs and tucked at the back while the other end hangs loosely in front, sometimes in folds or simply wound round the loin (see Plate XIII). Attired in this only article of dress he pursues his daily avocations and considers himself properly dressed. Poorer people cannot even procure so big a piece and remains satisfied with a much shorter one which is passed between the thighs and through a cotton girdle both in front and back—the front end hanging loosely in the form of a small apron (see Plate VII). Comparative & well-to-do persons wear, in addition to the loin cloth already mentioned, a second piece which is either kept folded on the shoulder or spread out and wrapped round the upper part of the body. But this extra piece is only to be brought out on festive occasions, such as marriage. Males do not wear any ornament except one or two finger rings and a necklace of glass beads. Necklaces of wooden beads are also met with.

The Kharria woman's dress consists of a single piece of *thadi* (cloth with wide borders) worn round the waist in the first instance and then round her bust, reaching up to the knee or sometimes to the ankle (see Plates XI and XII). The head remains uncovered. Their method of wearing the *thadi* does not differ from that of the Santals or Hos—their neighbours. They do not require a second piece even on festive occasions when only the quality of the cloth changes. Costly ornaments of gold or silver are unknown to them, even brass ones are rarely found. Cheap glass or conch-shell bangles are ordinarily worn. Ear pendants are also met with but nothing is worn on the nose. Only rich people can buy anklets of brass or aluminium-alloy for their womenfolk. The hair on the head is not much looked after and is simply collected and tied into a knot at the back.

Weapons.

The Kharrias are not a warlike people and do not possess many weapons. The bow and arrow together with the battle-axe

PLATE VII.



Kartick Kharia of Hiragoda. Note the method of wearing cloth.
 Measurements.—Stature—177.7 cm., Head length—18.2;
 Head breadth—12.7, Head height—13.2, Nose-length—4.5;
 Nose breadth—1.8

(*tāngi*) complete his armoury. The bow is of the "long-bow" type and is made of a bamboo strip slightly tapering at both ends. The bow-string differs in its material and method of attachment. It may be made of a simple bamboo strip, finely plaited, or of a fibre string. The arrow consists of two parts—the shaft made of a kind of reed and the iron point which may or may not be barbed. The shaft is generally feathered in double or quadruple rows at the tail-end. The battle-axe (*lāngi*) differs in size and shape. The blade is made of iron with steel cutting edge, and the handle is invariably wooden. The *tāngi* and the arrow points are not manufactured by the Kharas but are purchased from the local Lohāre (blacksmiths). They are used against animals and birds and are always carried by the Kharas when they go out on their daily round through the forest. We did not meet with any other weapon among them, in the tract under consideration.

CHAPTER III

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

Birth

Unlike their Ho and Bhumij sisters, the Kharia women are invariably attended by midwives at the time of parturition. The Kharias do not employ Ghari women as midwives like many of their neighbours. On the other hand the women of a particular section of the tribe devote themselves to this difficult task—it is a monopoly with them and the members of the other sections are not entitled to encroach upon it.

When an expectant mother feels the approach of labour pain she is put inside the hut, the only available shelter, as most often a Kharia couple do not possess more than one hut. The male members leave it for some time to come and improvise shelters for themselves as best they can.

The actual parturition takes place on the floor of this hut and the midwife renders as much help as she possibly can. The female relatives of the pair may enter the hut, if necessary, but may not touch the parturient woman. The *dhābhari* (midwife) cuts the umbilical cord of the child with a pen-knife. There is a difference of opinion as regards the disposal of the after birth. Malati (one of our female informants—aged about 60 years) speaks of it as being thrown away by the *dhābhari* (midwife) but Sabni and Bari—two other female informants from another village—state that it is buried outside the hut under its eaves (*chāñchi*). It is possible that the custom differs in different quarters.

After cutting off the umbilical cord both mother and child are anointed with turmeric paste and mustard oil and bathed

PLATE VIII
16



PLATE VIII
16



The person in the photograph is a woman, and the material covering her face is a piece of fabric or a mask. The photograph is a black and white reproduction of a photograph taken by the author. The photograph is a reproduction of a photograph taken by the author.

in cold water. Then, they are placed on a *khatal* (rope-made cot with wooden frame) within the hut.

The birth pollution lasts for nine days and the mother and the child may not come out of the house till the end of this period. Males are not allowed to enter the hut during these days; women may do so but may not touch either the mother or the child who are regarded as ceremonially unclean. The mother may not eat meat or fish during the period of pollution. Other near relatives also observe the birth pollution for the same period but no restriction is put on their food and other ordinary avocations of life. They are only regarded as ceremonially unclean. Dancing and music may not take place in the house during these days. Castele does not exist among the Kharis.

The birth pollution is brought to an end at the expiry of the nine days by a purification ceremony when both the mother and the child are bathed and then sprinkled with water in which *tulasi* (*Chromola Sanctum*) leaves have been immersed. They are besmeared with turmeric paste and mustard oil later on. The hut is also purified with sprinkling of water in which *tulasi* (*Chromola Sanctum*) leaves have been previously immersed. The male members of the house, who are under pollution, are shaved and purified with a bath. Thus ends the birth pollution and from this day the taboos put upon the mother, child and other near relatives, are removed and they resume their ordinary course of life. It may be mentioned here that the earthenware vessels of the family are not thrown away and the birth pollution does not affect any other article of the house.

The name giving ceremony also takes place on this day. A name is selected by the father or some other near relatives (*khumbhar*) of the child and is formally announced by the *dhumburi* (midwife). The friends and relations are then treated to a feast. The Kharis seem to be much influenced by their Hindu neighbours in the selection of their names. Thus typical Hindu names like Hari, Nalin, Gopi, Kārtik, Sanātan, etc., occur among them to indicate the male members. We

have already referred to Malati as the name of a woman among them.

The *dhaiburi* (midwife) is rewarded with a sum varying from annas four to eight according to the pecuniary circumstances of the family. Malati speaks of the sum as definitely fixed at one pice only which, if true, seems to be a nominal one. It is possible that her assertions refer to an earlier condition of Kharis life and this appears to be borne out by the differences she has with the other informants in other points as well.

If the newly born child dies of convulsion within a short period after birth it is attributed to the *bhūt* (ghost or evil spirit) who is believed to have visited the child on the previous night and has caused this mischief. Such infants are buried without the usual offerings but the purificatory ceremonies take place as usual in other deaths.

Education.

Education, in the sense of learning from books, does not exist among the Wild Kharis. But in its broader sense "implying the drawing out of faculties" it may be found even in this wretched group of humanity. Primitive society always aims at environmental adjustment in material culture and their system of education also takes its cue from this ideal. Thus education, in all its branches, —economic, physical, social, moral and religious—is imparted to the Kharis boys and young men through channels which similarly function in other primitive social groups.

The economic life of the tribe is extremely simple. They still represent the "food-gathering stage" of culture and depend for their livelihood on the collection of roots and fruits from the jungle, supplemented by hunting and fishing. The boys join their elders at a comparatively early age in the quest

PLATE IX
(b)



PLATE IX
(a)



Gopi Khani of Dargah—Bali Khani seated on a stone in the center of a platform in the house of a Bengali Brahmin. Height—5 ft. 10 in., Head breadth—13 in., Head circumference—24 in., Chest circumference—34 in., Arm length—19 in., Forearm length—11 in., Hand length—7 in., Foot length—11 in., Toe length—4 in.

for food. They qualify themselves in this important task through their boyhood playings when they mostly imitate the actions of their elders. The importance of the "educative play" of primitive children in the training of youth is no longer questioned. The question of physical education of the Kharwa boys is, to a great extent, solved by this play-proclivity. The recollection of myths, traditions and stereotypes train them up in the religious, moral, and social aims and ideals of the people. These are often repeated to them by their elders, both male and female, and form an important part of their educational system.

Manners and Social Organisation

The Kharwa or Chaklari as they call themselves, are divided into a number of exogamous clans

Social Organisation.

known as *gasthis*.¹ Bikramsing of Phunhauri, an old Kharwa informant, fixed the *traditional number* of *gasthis* at twelve, but unfortunately he could not supply the names of all the twelve *gasthis*. He mentioned only four names and from another informant of a different village I could secure the names of two more *gasthis*. They are the following :—

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| (1) Kushi | } Supplied by Bikramsing of Phunhauri |
| (2) Khehri | |
| (3) Higur | |
| (4) Logaria | |
| (5) Kanca (or Bhunya in Kharwa) | } Supplied by Kanchhayan of Gohadi. |
| (6) Golgu | |

Bikramsing's account of twelve *gasthis* arouses our interest when we remember that the Santals also are traditionally divided

¹ It is a Sanskrit word reflecting family in the wider sense—a universal body of kindred relatives descended from a common ancestor. It has apparently been borrowed from the Hindus.

into twelve clans. But among the Mundas, Hos or Bhamias we do not meet with any such traditional fixity of clans.

The *goshti* is a strictly exogamous body and its members cannot marry among themselves. Such a relation is regarded as incestuous and is forbidden. It is a collateral group where descent is traced from father to children—both male and female. Kartick Kharia of H. Kiganga and his wife stated that as soon as a girl is married she adopts the *goshti* of her husband. They also said that widows cannot remain in the *goshti* of their father but they are allowed to descend to the *goshti* of their husband or in any other *goshti*. These statements of Kartick and his wife are not corroborated from the other sources at our disposal and require further verification. It is possible that ideas of Hindu social organisation are at the root of these assertions.

The *goshti* names appear to be totemistic but it cannot be definitely stated from the facts at our disposal. These Wild Kharias have, in most of the cases, forgotten the literal import of the terms. To them, these terms indicate the *goshti* only and nothing more. Only in one case, out of the six mentioned above, we could secure the literal meaning. Khura is at the same time, the name of a *goshti* and of a kind of fish, of the red variety. But it is neither worshipped nor respected by the members of this *goshti*.

As already stated the Wild Kharias of Dhalbhum are divided into a number of exogamous clans.

MARRIAGE. Thus a man from the Golga *goshti* may marry in any other of the five *goshtis*, mentioned before, but not in his own. Even there is no restriction as regards the mother's father's *goshti*. Thus a man may marry even a very near relative by the mother's side. But this is avoided by observing the law of 'prohibited degrees'. Socially all the clans are on the same level, and we do not find any other kind

* She appeared to be very intelligent and informative and supplied us with many interesting details of their manners and customs.

of division of the tribe into higher and lower groups. Therefore, hypergamy is unknown to them. Marriage with the elder sister of the wife is strictly prohibited both during and after the life-time of the wife. She is held in great respect. But the younger sisters of the wife may be married at any time. The widowed wife of the elder brother may also be remarried.

The most usual means of securing brides is by purchase.

Types of Marriage. The bride price for a maiden varies from rupees five to ten. In addition to this the bridegroom has to give a piece of cloth known as *ma dath* (mother-cloth) to his mother-in-law. He also gives to his wife's brother another piece of cloth known as *dath-dhuti* (brother-in-law cloth). Over and above these he has to give one piece of *dath* (hardened cloth) to his bride. The payment for a widow or divorced woman (*trich chatti*) is fixed at rupee one and annas four. In most of the cases marriage is brought about through this peaceful means. But even among the Wild Kharias marriage by force is not unknown. When two young persons of the opposite sexes form an attachment for each other and when they find their guardians opposed to their cherished union, the young man puts a little vermillion on the forehead of the girl of his choice. This amounts to marriage in Kharia society as also among many other Munda speaking tribes. Now the guardians of the girl have to come down and make peace. But the bride price in such cases amounts to double the usual rate. The other rituals connected with marriage are next gone through in regular course. This means is adopted not only to force the guardians but often unwilling maidens are compelled to come to terms by their new-tied lovers through this method. Here also double the usual bride price has to be paid and rituals performed in usual manner later on. Thus it forms a potent instrument in the hands of more energetic and impetuous youths. But sometimes it leads to quarrels and from words passes to blows, many a times ending in serious mischief.



A more peaceful means is that of exchange. One of our informants, Bikkraasing, of Phulburi, married for the second time a widow and gave away in exchange his maiden daughter to the son of the brother of this second wife. Of course he was entitled to some consideration but he did gallantly forego the claim and did not receive anything.

Cross-cousin marriage of both the types prevail among the Kharas. A man may marry either his mother's brother's daughter or the father's sister's daughter or any one else standing in the same relationship with him but preferably the former two.

Monogamy is the most widely prevalent form of union among these wild peoples. Polygamy is not tabooed by religion or custom but their economic condition does not allow them to indulge in this luxury. The extreme indigence of the people coupled with the limited source of food supply exert a sufficiently deterrent influence over the natural proclivities of the Kharas. In spite of this we shall not be surprised to find some men practising a sort of limited polygamy. A man commonly marries a maiden girl at first and increases the number later on by marrying some widow. The custom of levirate helps him in this. But such addition cannot go on indefinitely as the economic circumstances intervene and put a stop to this. Polyandry is completely unknown to them.

Among the wild Kharas of Dhadhum infant marriage is almost unknown. Very rarely young men of immature age marry. Only people of comparatively affluent circumstances indulge in this sort of unions. But such instances are few and far between. But it must not be construed that they have any religious prohibition against marriage before adult age. The restriction seems to be customary and economic in origin. Moreover, the good sense of the people prevailed in the development and continuance of such a healthy custom especially in the case of girls, who might have been given away in marriage at an earlier age, as among the



• *Interior of the Museum, showing the collection of the various birds and mammals.*
 The building is a fine example of the architecture of the city.

Hindu lower caste population of Bengal owing to the price paid for them by the groom.

Men marry at a sufficiently advanced age when they can earn the bride-price. The bride-price is sometimes paid by the parents of the groom but most often they earn it themselves. Girls are usually married after puberty. Generally they are younger than their husbands.

Love-matches are not unknown and unusual among the Kharrias but the general custom is for the Match maker guardian of the bride and bridegroom to make all arrangements regarding consubstantial matters. The first approach may be made by either of the parties. The father of a marriageable young man or maiden does not himself approach the other party. He seeks the help of one of his co-villagers—certainly a member of his own community and preferably a relative—who is regarded as eminently fitted for such important affairs by intelligence and behaviour. Professional match-makers are unknown to this people and the go-between employed is sought after for his superior knowledge of tribal custom and for cleverness in settling business affairs, e.g., fixing the bride-price, etc. In one instance only a nominal fee is mentioned but this seems to be immaterial and may not occur in other places. The appointment of a go-between is not, after all, compulsory. We found definite instances of direct approach made by the relatives of the bride or bridegroom. The ordinary go-between who may or may not be a relative—is known as *ghatak*. The term is evidently borrowed from the Bengali vocabulary and seems to be a case of misapplication as the Hindu *ghatak* is a professional man of a very much specialised calling.

When the terms of the match are settled by one or more Date of marriage visits from both sides a convenient date is fixed for the performance of the ceremony. In the selection of the date of marriage the Kharrias are not influenced by any belief as to the auspicious or inauspicious nature of the

day. For them the days of the week and of the months of the year are equally good. They are less particular by religion or astrological consideration on the selection of the date. The only thing which enters into their calculation is mutual convenience. The actual marriage ritual—the binding portion of the ceremony—is generally gone through during night, but there is no taboo against its performance during daytime.

On the day of marriage, already settled by mutual consent, the bridegroom together with his male and female relatives goes for the house of the bride's father. The male members of the party proceed playing on the *drutka*, *mamtu*, *tugetu*, *thumma* and other musical instruments as far as available and they add to the mirth of the party. According to one version the procession starts in the morning and returns on the next morning, whereas the other version describes it as starting in the afternoon and returning on the next afternoon. However this may be, as soon as the procession approaches the village of the bride's father it is received with similar instrumental music by a body of friends and relatives of both the sexes of the bride's father. The two parties then assemble in the house of the bride's father and exchange food. The indispensable *hau-hu* (rice-brew) is served in profuse quantity. When they have sufficiently saturated themselves with it, dancing and music, both vocal and instrumental, follow and continue throughout the remaining portion of the day and through the night. The bridegroom's party is treated to two meals during their stay in the house of festivity. The exact time of these meals vary according to the time of arrival of the party. The first generally consists of boiled rice and boiled pulse. If the flesh of domestic fowls or goats be added to it the function creates a name.

The binding portion of Kharia marriage—the actual ritualistic part of the ceremony—seems to be concentrated in the

* Different kinds of drums.

function of *sindurdan*. The bridegroom and the bride stand in the open courtyard of the house and the bridegroom applies vermilion point on the forehead of the bride, before all the friends and relatives of both the parties present on the occasion. The Kharia bride and the bridegroom are anointed with mustard oil and turmeric paste in course of the marriage ceremony by their respective relatives in their own houses. Some of the informants said that at the time of *sindurdan* both the bride and the bridegroom are required to wear white clothes without border. After the *sindurdan* ceremony, according to some of the informants, the bride's mother bids her a formal farewell which brings to an end the marriage ritual. One of the informants refer to mutual exchange of garlands between the bride and the bridegroom. But this appears to be a local custom as the other informants do not refer to it.

On the following day the bridegroom's party, along with the bride and her male and female relatives returns to the house of the bridegroom. Here, on their arrival, the *camari* ceremony takes place. The elderly female relatives of the bridegroom such as his mother, aunts, and others kiss the forehead of the bride and the bridegroom. *Handi* (rice-brew) is supplied unobtrusively to the assembled relatives and music and dancing follow and continue for the whole day and the night following. A feast is also given here and the whole ceremony brought to an end with the departure of the relatives of the bride on the next day.

Widows and divorced women may remarry but their price is fixed at rupee one and annas four and all the marriage rituals performed at the time of a maiden's marriage are not gone through.

Divorce is allowed in case of adultery on the part of the wife.

A newly married Kharia couple may set up a separate household or may live in the house of the husband's father. In the latter case a separate hut is constructed within the

some compounds and the pot is put under the guardianship of the parents of the adolescent with whom they keep a common purse and common hearth. If, as they live separately, they do not receive anything from their parents. A hut is constructed with the help of the other members of the village and the few household utensils of wood, bark and earth are procured from the earnings of the husband.

Death and Funeral

The Wildkharts of Bhadrabail still believe in the spirit-
 kinds of diseases. To them most of the ailments are caused by the
^{Demons and Deities}
^{spirits and deities.} These spirits and deities need not be always malevolent. Sometimes, even otherwise benevolent ones turn out evil-doers through neglect or disrespect shown to them. Epidemic diseases like cholera, small pox, etc., are always attributed to the activities of evil spirits. The treatment of diseases among them logically follows their aetiology. Under ordinary circumstances when a man is suffering from some common disease of no special nature, nothing is done. Common diseases like fever, dysentery, diarrhoea, itches, cold, etc., unless very acute, do not require any treatment at all. They depend in such cases on nature alone. But when these ailments are accompanied by other symptoms of a serious nature, such as delirium and when they perceive that the very life of the patient is in danger or when any disease prolongs for a period beyond their natural duration according to Kharia ideology they take recourse to a divinatory ceremony known as *nuncha-nunchi*. The purpose of the ceremony is to find out the spirit responsible for the ailment who is then worshipped according to prescribed rites. This is believed to be sufficient to cure the patient. If the patient does not come round by the end of the period thought to be sufficient for the purpose the rite of *nuncha-nunchi* is

PLATE XI



Lāngru and his wife Kusān in Wild Khazānā from Murshidābād. Kusān is the daughter of Bikram (Plate X). Note the method of suckling children.

repeated again and again till the particular spirit at the root of the evil is found out or the patient himself dies.

In case of epidemic diseases they not only try to appease the particular disease-spirit but also take recourse to the wiser and more effective means of leaving the locality for a new one. This often helps them much but is not always equally efficacious.

In spite of all we have stated above it may not be believed that the Kharrias are completely ignorant of the efficacy of herbs. As denizens of the forests they are acquainted with the medicinal properties of some of the plants and sometimes make good use of such knowledge. The most common form of accident such as wounds and sprains which befall the lot of every rover of hills and forests are treated with herbs known to them. Such herbs are mostly applied externally and we find rare cases of internal application.

This belief in the efficacy of herbs and their application by the Kharrias, no doubt, clash against what we have already said about their aetiology of diseases. Treatment certainly should follow aetiology if it aims to be logical. But this apparent incongruity may be explained if we assume that the use of herbs is a new trait accretion, to the already existing tribal culture-complex, at a time when they started on a new phase of their existence marked by the adoption of the language of their more fortunate neighbours along with other cultural traits. We have already met with evidences pointing to such a cultural change in the previous sections and more will follow.

If all the means to combat disease fail they submit to the inevitable. Death is not viewed with philosophic ponderation and abstraction. As real children of nature they violently give vent to their passions of grief. The more near and dear relatives rend the sky with cries of sorrow and tears flow freely from their eyes. No attempt is made to suppress the feelings dominant at the time. When the first wave of this powerful feeling passes over, the members of the family divert their attention to the disposal of the earthly

remains of the deceased one. In this they are always helped by the other members of the settlement who assemble in the house of mourning as soon as they hear of the misadventure. These people take the lead in the matter of the disposal of the dead body.

Burial seems to be the approved method of disposing the dead. Cremation is also sometimes resorted to but this does not appear to be the standard method. Only one group of my informants refer to cremation as far better and safer of the two methods. But I am not disposed to accept their view as correct in the face of a mass of evidence to the contrary from numerous sources, and also in view of the fact that they live nearer to centres of Hindu culture, the living copies of customs to make elements from it. But even this group admits that cases of burials now far outnumber those of cremations and tries to explain it away on the ground of lack of sufficient fuel.

Shortly after a person has breathed his last the dead body is carefully anointed with tamarind paste and mustard oil irrespective of the form of disposal to be adopted. This is done in the house of the dead man and by the female members of the family. One of the informants give precedence to the wife and after her to the daughter. Another informant would have us believe that in case of male death it will be done by the female members of the house while in case of female death it should be done by the daughter or son's wife or any other female member of the house or even of the village. The corpse is next placed on a *chafan* and carried to the burial or cremation ground, as the case may be, by the nearest male relatives. According to Malast a little earth from the house and a living being of any kind belonging to the house, usually an insect* are put on the bier and carried to the burial ground where they are interred

* Among the Mons of Burma the ghost of a dead person is symbolised by a butterfly which is carried on the 'ghost tray' along with the dead body to the cemetery (Mon in India, Vol. D, p. 188.)

PLATE XII.



The young wife of Kothi Khana of Gchänd. Note the method of wearing *sari* and the ornaments on her wrist.

along with the body. This piece of information is really interesting from different standpoints. It is not impossible that the widespread custom of killing big animals or even human beings (commonly slaves or wives) at the time of funeral rites so that they may accompany the dead to the other world and minister to the needs of the departed soul there, has assumed this quaint form among the Kharas. But the difficulty to such an assumption lies in the fact that we do not possess any more reference to this peculiar custom from any other informant.

The Kharas have a fixed burial or cremation ground usually situated on the bank of a river nearby. As soon as the body is carried there a pit is dug about two to three cubits in depth with vertical walls. Malati speaks of precedence even here—it being first the privilege of the son, next the daughter and her husband and after them the other relatives. But the other informants do not say anything like this. The dead body is next placed on its back upon a sort of bed already laid out, with the head pointing towards the north. A little above the body a number of wooden logs are placed crosswise very near one another. The grave is then filled up with earth and a few pieces of stone are heaped upon it in an irregular form, probably to keep off animals from disturbing the grave.

Offerings consisting of cooked rice and other edibles are next placed on the grave. Sometimes a piece of copper coin¹ and the ornaments, specially those worn on the neck, are also deposited there. The party next bathes in the river or tank nearby and returns home. Before dispersal they have to touch fire and eat one or two nim (*Azadirachta Indica*) leaves.² The adult members of the family, both male and female, as well as persons who take part in the disposal of the dead body may not take any food on that day. One of the informants speaks of a rite called *numbhat* which takes place on the next day when those

¹ The Hindus of Bengal place five cowry shells on the place of cremation to enable the departed soul to pay the ferry fare while crossing the *Bastaragi*.

² The Bengali Hindus also observe this custom in many places.

who accompanied the dead body are treated to a feast of which boiled rice and nim (*Azadirachta Indica*) leaves form a part.

In case of cremation the fire is first applied to the mouth of the dead body by the son, or father or brother or in their absence, by any member of the *gosthi*. The other rites, both preceding and succeeding, are performed as in the case of burial.

Death pollution is observed by the members of the family—

one and all—as well as the nearest relatives.

By nearest relatives they seem to mean the members of the *gosthi* living nearabout and known to the family. But we are not sure about it. Near relatives by marriage do not appear to be counted much in this matter. The period of pollution lasts for nine days when meat and fish are tabooed to the members of the family. One of the informants taboo meat and fish to the female members of the family only and to those who accompanied the bier. But practically this amounts to be a taboo to all the family members as all the adult male members are expected to take part in the funeral. No other form of taboo is mentioned.

On the tenth day after death the pollution is removed by purificatory ceremonies. The male members of the family and the nearest relatives who took part in the funeral shave their beards and crop their hair. As the Kharis do not employ Hindu barbers like the other tribes of the locality, they have to help one another in this matter. After this, both the male and the female members bathe in the nearest tank, river or bundh and anoint themselves with turmeric paste and mustard oil. In one place they go so far as to sprinkle water in which tulasi (*Ocimum Sanctum*) leaves have been immersed. The household articles are also purified with sprinkling of turmeric water. The homestead is purified by plastering with cowdung solution. According to one informant the earthen cooking utensils are thrown away on the tenth day of pollution. After purification the mourners are treated to a feast which closes the funeral ceremony.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

General account.

The materials at our disposal about the religious beliefs and practices of the Kharrias are not sufficient to give a reliable picture of their attainments in this branch. The little that we could secure deals with the description of a few of their deities and the method adopted in their worship.

The Kharrias believe in the existence of deities and spirits. They are at the root of all evils that may fall upon them. These powerful supernatural beings should be kept in good humour by means of worship, from time to time. As already stated, all sorts of diseases are caused by dissatisfied spirits and deities. Not only this, failure of edible roots and fruits in the forest, absence of game in course of hunting excursions and the natural accidents of a forest-roving life, are all attributed to the malevolent activities of this agency.

The Kharrias employ the services of a priest known as *dehuri*, in the worship of some of their deities. But in most cases the house-father officiates as priest. The *dehuri* is always a member of their own tribe. Persons from other tribes are not employed by the Kharrias though the Santals, Mundas and other neighbouring tribes may be officiated by a Kharria *dehuri*. The Kharria *dehuri* of Phulphara not only serves the Kharrias of the two or three neighbouring villages but also the other tribal peoples of those villages such as the Santals, Mundas and others. The office seems to be confined to a particular family and the son usually succeeds the father. But in the absence of a son or during his minority a second man is selected by the whole village population including the

Mundas, Kharias, Santals and others. As soon as the son of the former *dehuri* attains majority and shows proof of the requisite qualifications of a priest the new man silently reverts to his former position and the son of the former priest occupies the place. This account of the *dehuri* may have a little local colouring as we could not verify it from other sources.

The Deities and their Worship.

Karam Pujā.

In the month of Bhādra, on a date already settled by the *dehuri* in consultation with the villagers, the Karam Pujā takes place. It is performed by individual householders in their own houses and there is no compulsion about it. A branch of the Karam tree is planted in the courtyard and the *dehuri* or the house-father officiates as priest. *Ātap* (sun-dried) rice is offered and goats or fowls are sacrificed. A second version of the ceremony places it in the month of Āświn on a selected Sunday or Wednesday when the *dehuri* officiates and the performance takes place before sunrise.

After the worship, the branch of the Karam tree is thrown away into a river.

The whole ceremony is characterised by the gathering of friends and relatives who are treated to a feast. Dancing and music follow and the males and females join in it without any restriction. *Hāṇḍiā* (rice-brew) is profusely served. This mirthful and festive nature of the ceremony isolates it from the other religious rites of the Kharias.

The dead ancestors of the family are worshipped within the hut on two occasions, namely, on the

Ancestor worship.

Rākhi Pūrṇimā day (Full-moon day) of the month of Bhādra and also on the last day of the month of Pauṣ. Fowls are sacrificed and food is offered to them by the master of the house who officiates in the rite. The services

PLATE XIII.



Bayala Kharis of Bagula. Note the smaller big-toes. The younger uterine brother of Hari Kharis (Plate VIII).

Measurements:—Stature—155·6;

Head-length—17·7; Head-breadth—13·6; Head-height—13·2;

Nose-length—3·9; Nose-breadth—3·6.

of the *dehuri* are not requisitioned for this purpose. We did not find any particular part of the hut set up as the seat of the ancestral spirits, as among the Hos.

Dharam or the sun-deity is worshipped on the last day of the month of Paus (Ākan-yātrā day) by every householder in his own house. Here also, instead of the *dehuri*, the master of the house officiates as priest. The officiant has to remain fasting from the morning of the previous day. On the day of worship, with the rising of the sun, the housefather offers *atap* rice, etc., to the deity and sacrifices a white fowl. The whole rite is performed on a cleansed space, besmeared with cowdung solution, in the courtyard of the house.

The presiding deity of the hills is known to them as Pāt Devatā. He is worshipped on the summit of some hill, in the month of Māgh, on a day fixed by the participants themselves. The worship is not performed by any individual householder separately but the whole settlement participates in it jointly. The *dehuri* officiates as priest. A red fowl is sacrificed and its head is severed with a knife.

Another hill deity is Barām who is worshipped in the month of Māgh. In this case also the worship is performed on some hill during daytime when the *dehuri* officiates. Fowls of any colour are sacrificed and rice is offered to the deity. This is also a communal worship and the village priest is fed by the villagers on this day.

Bikramsing of Phuljuri, already referred to, speaks of a ceremony known as Borām-yātrā which also takes place in the month of Māgh. But instead of the hill-deity of Barām Pujā, the roots, fruits and flowers are said to be worshipped on this occasion. This is also a communal worship. Both Barām Pujā and Borām-yātrā seem to refer to the same thing but still the difference is noteworthy and nothing can be said without further verification.

In the month of Caitra, the Santals perform the Sarhul festival. The Kharias of the locality participate in this festival of the Santals. They do not independently perform this worship. Before the Sarhul Pujā the Kharias abstain from eating the new leaves of the Sal trees which are a delicacy to them.

Bāghut or the presiding deity of the tigers is worshipped by the Kharias with red fowl and *ātop* (sun-dried) rice. It takes place in each household and the house-father officiates as priest.

Makar Parab, which takes place in the month of Paus, is an occasion of pure festivity for the Kharias. No religious rite is performed on this occasion. *Oidā* (parched and flattened rice or grain) and molasses¹ are eaten on this day. During this festival the ear-boring ceremony takes place.

Divination.

When a Kharia suffers from some difficult disease the services of an *ojhā* are requisitioned to find out the cause of such illness. He takes a little oil in the palm of his hand and poses to look through it. Gradually he visualises there the particular spirit who is at the root of the disease. When this is found out the spirit is worshipped with fowl and other things according to the prescribed manner, on the crossing of two roads, and thereby appeased. This is believed to cure the patient.

¹ Cf. the Bengali festival held on the same day.